

A
T R E A T I S E
O F
C O N F I D E N C E
I N T H E
M E R C Y of G O D,

For the Consolation of those Souls that are thrown
into Discouragement by FEAR.

To which is added,

A Treatise on the FALSE HAPPINESS of worldly
People, and the TRUE HAPPINESS of a
Christian Life.

Written in FRENCH by

JOHN JOSEPH LANGUET,
Bishop of *Soissons*;

And now faithfully translated into ENGLISH,
From the Sixth Edition, revised by the AUTHOR.

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M D C C L X V I I I.

A

T R A N S A C T I O N S

OF

G O V E R N M E N T

AND OF THE

LEGISLATURE



FOR THE

YEAR 1850

AND

THE

LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

AND

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STATE OF NEW YORK

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THE

LEGISLATURE

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*The APPROBATION to an Edition printed
at Brussels, by way of PREFACE:*

I Have read this new impression of two
Treatises, one *Of Confidence in the Mercy of
God*; and the other *Of the false Happiness of
worldly People, and of the true Happiness of a
Christian Life*, by *John Joseph Languet*, Bishop
of *Soissons*; the first for the consolation of
just souls, and the encouragement of con-
verted sinners, or such at least as are sincerely
desirous of being converted, by shewing them
in its full light the solidity, necessity, and ad-
vantages, of confidence in God. The solidity,
because it is grounded upon the great love of
God towards us, and his sincere will to save
all men. The necessity, because this love of
God requires it of us; and the advantages,
because it saves us infallibly. It is a power-
ful help against the temptations and wiles of
the devil, who having deprived man of the
fear of God, and of his judgments, to make
him fall into sin, and continue in it, renders
him fearful, and redoubles the same fear, to
hinder him from rising again, and advancing
in the way of salvation. In like manner he
makes him lose the shame of sin, to facilitate
sin to him, and augments sin that he may

not confess it. The other treatise is to undeceive worldly people, and to shew what that true happiness consists in, which we are capable of upon earth. Those that have already sought and found it in christian piety and virtue, by reading this treatise, will applaud themselves for the choice they have made. Those that already perceive, like the person to whom this treatise is addressed, that true felicity cannot be enjoyed in the goods and pleasures of the world, will be easily persuaded, that it cannot be found in any thing but a truly christian life. In fine, those that believe they can find true felicity in the pleasures, advantages, and other goods of the world, will discover their blindness by the sight of so many proofs, which amount even to demonstration. For how can it be imagined that there is true happiness in goods which are always attended, or followed, with weariness, inquietude, grief, bitterness, disgust, and what is possessed in an uncertainty of long enjoyment, but always certain of being lost one day, and perhaps at the very moment they are thought to be enjoyed. It is to be wished that all worldly people may read it, and by the help of grace discover their wandering.

Given at *Brussels*,
Oct. 5, 1739.

H. J. LAMBERT,
Examiner and Censurer of
Books.

FIRST



F I R S T P A R T.

In which are established the Grounds of that Confidence which we ought to have in the Mercy of God.

S E C T I O N I.

The Mercy of God is little known, particularly by timid People, who give themselves up too much to Fear.

AMONGST all the perfections of God, which reason and faith discover to us, it seems to me there is none imagined to be better known, but is the least so, than his mercy. People think they know it, because they are continually speaking of it. It comes into all the reflections they make upon the eternal truths. It is, as it were, the soul and motive of all the sentiments of piety which they excite and feel in themselves. And if it ought to be the consolation of the just, it seems to be much more at present the resource and support of sinners.

However, I say they know it not, or if they do it is only by halves ; and that they form to themselves an unjust idea thereof, and

which is unworthy of it. I say this chiefly of all those, who make use of it as of a support in the libertinism of their lives; who continue to be wicked, because God does not cease to be good; and wholly upon this mercy, to authorise themselves in their impenitence.

This state is common, it has been so at all times, and the Scripture often condemns the folly of those presumptuous people. However there are others who seem to be better instructed, and are so indeed, but are not sufficiently instructed upon this matter. So far from presuming too much on the goodness of God, they know the whole extent of their obligation to labour in their own salvation, and they labour in it indeed; they even do it courageously. They have no attachment to the world, or to its pleasures; they fear sin often even to a scruple; they are exact in fulfilling the duties of their state, and daily employ the best part of their time in prayer, and in the practice of works of charity. However in the midst of these holy occupations, the mercy of God seems to afford them nothing that is consolatory. Struck with the terrifying idea of his judgments and justice, they forget what a God-man, a God-infant, a God-saviour, and a God-spouse, has that is amiable; to possess themselves only with what a God-judge, a God-avenger, and a God-severe, has that is terrible for them; scarce dare they hope in him. The divine love, which has so much
sweet-

sweetness for others, has nothing sensible for them, but inquietude and fear lest they should not love enough. They are afflicted, they tremble, and are disturbed. Their desolated heart tastes neither sweetness nor rest in the practice of virtue; and it may be said, that if confidence in sinners be mounted up to presumption, so there are some just people whose too lively fear is sometimes driven down to discouragement.

I have several times seen some of these fervent souls given up to those troubles I have just described, and could not avoid compassionating their pains. I have even seen some, and cannot think on it without fear, who too weak to support those scruples and fears, have fallen into dejection and a frightful despair; because in dreading the justice of God, they had forgotten that confidence which his mercy ought to have inspired them with to support them. I have seen others, who drawing another kind of error from the same source, and who discouraged with that piety which cost them so much inquietude, entirely abandoned the practice of christian virtues, to seek in libertinism a peace which they did not find in the fervour of the service of God.

The wandering of the one and the others undoubtedly proceeds from their not knowing how to measure, according to the rules of christian prudence, the bounds of the justice and mercy of God, and from their being ignorant

of the rules and extent of them : very different from the royal prophet, who equally singing the praises of these two attributes, *I will sing mercy and judgment to thee, O Lord,* (Ps. c.) found in the one whereof to form that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and in the other wherewith to inspire that confidence which is the consummation of charity.

If this temptation be afflicting during life, it is undoubtedly much more dreadful at the approaches of death. Then the mind being weakened, *and the soul weighed down by the body, which is corrupted,* as the Scripture says, (*Wisd. ix.*) is but little able to bear the lively impressions of that fear. However it is then that it ought to become much more sensible, because the judgments of God ought to appear much more terrible, when they seem at hand, as one may say. For if in the course of life, the remembrance of them terrifies even to discouragement, how shall their approach at the time of death be born without despair?

Hence often proceed those inquietudes, agitations, and repugnances, which are sometimes observed with astonishment in just persons, who have lived fervently, and whom we are surpris'd to see die with bitterness and desolation. Alas! it is not the attachment to life which is the cause of this. There is no other reason for it than an immoderate fear of the judgments of God, which hope does not secure them from. *St. Hilary* is not the only person,

person, who stood in need of seeking something in the length of his penance, to secure his timid soul, which at the hour of death seemed to hesitate to depart and go to God, whose judgments it dreaded.

SECTION II.

Divers sources of this Fear.

THESE fears and alarms seem to be the same in all those that experience them; however in many they have different sources. In some they proceed from mere ignorance. Often, as I have said, they do not know the measure of the justice of God, nor the extent of his mercy. Neither do they know christian hope, much less do they know what confidence is, which is the fruit and perfection of that virtue. The tenderness of the heart, and the consolation it produces therein, which is the common effect of that confidence, is no less unknown. Lastly, what they are still more ignorant of, is the alliance between that tenderness of confidence and the fervour of charity, which ought to find its sweetness and consummation therein.

The most enlightened souls are not always exempt from these very fears. In them these fears proceed from the temptation of the devil, who being unable to seduce the just by the excess of confidence, with which he se-

duces so many sinners, he seeks to deceive them by a contrary way, and to throw them into discouragement and despair; either by exaggerating to them the inexorable severity of the judgments of God; or enlarging to the eyes of their humility the number and enormity of their past faults; or reproaching them by continual scruples with their daily failings, or the imperfections of their good works.

Those wicked spirits, *who*, as the scripture says, (*Ecclus. xxxix.*) *are created for vengeance, redouble their fury at the consummation of our lives*, and employ that temptation with still greater force both against the just and against sinners, at the hour of death. Then it is that they use their utmost endeavours to inspire them with that despair; because they know it is the only means they have left, either to weaken the charity of the one, or to lay an obstacle to the penance of the other.

We may find a third source of these alarms in the very will of God. Tho' he be full of tenderness towards a faithful soul, yet he is pleased sometimes to frighten it with the sight of his judgments; and instead of comforting it with the remembrance of his mercies, he seems to refuse it them and to abandon it. He hides from it his sensible presence, and the consolation of his love, to try the courage of its perseverance by those rigours. Thus it is that in the *Canticles* the bridegroom hides himself for a time, to try the fidelity of his spouse; and

and also perhaps to make her find more sweetness in the pleasure of finding him again. This is what the Saints have so often experienced in the drineffes, disgusts, and interiour privations, in those terrors and desolations in which the soul thinks itself almost abandoned. A state which all the masters of a spiritual life have described so well, and which we find pictures of in the *Psalms* of that holy King, who owed much to the mercy of God, but who had no less a lively feeling of all the terrors of his justice.

Now whether this be ignorance, temptation, or trial, it is always important to prepare consolations for those disturbed souls, and to recover them from a fear often excessive, always dangerous, and which is sometimes a dreadful source of relaxation. For, as I have already said, if confidence be carried by the pride of the sinner up to presumption, it is not astonishing that fear in timid souls should sometimes be driven down to discouragement and despair.

SECTION III.

An Explanation of that Fear which is mentioned in this Treatise. There is a profitable and necessary Fear; it is only the excessive Fear which is here opposed.

HOWEVER, let it be observed, that it is only the excess of fear which I pretend to attack, and not fear in itself. For it may

truly be said, there is a salutary fear, which not only *paves the way to wisdom*, (Ps. cx.) and lays the foundations of it; but which ought even to remain in the hearts of the just, and support them in every state of their lives, and even in all the degrees of perfection. It is undoubtedly the want of this necessary fear, which maintains so many souls in tepidity, who think themselves just, and are not so; because the devil has seduced them by presumption, illusion, and pride.

It may even be added, that there are some holy and select souls, who walk in the ways of piety, and go to God, only by the path of fear. These are precisely faithful to God, because they fear him. It is true their fear is not merely that servile fear, which has no mixture of love in it, or which has only some slight impressions of it. It is a fear which supposes love, but which prevails over love, as to the sensible impression. I would willingly compare it to the love of those children, who by the austerity of their governours, form to themselves a timid nature in their education. Tho' they love their father, yet they are always in apprehension and terror with regard to him. They think he looks upon them only to punish them, or speaks to them only to reprehend them. They have all the sentiments of love for him that nature has given them; but the tenderness and sensibility which that love should have, is stifled by the too lively
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impressions of timidity. Such is the disposition of those I am speaking of. They love God, but their fear becomes more sensible than love; and it is good for them that they are conducted by this path, every other perhaps would be prejudicial to them: for there is nothing but this most lively fear that could restrain a heart naturally presumptuous, and humble a mind which vanity puffs up at every moment. Hence it is that God makes the most fervent souls feel from time to time, those impressions of terror and dread, to retain them thereby in humiliation, and to repress that pride which might be excited by the abundance of graces which they receive.

So far from condemning these sentiments, I admire the goodness of God, who vouchsafes to abase himself so far as to study, as one may say, our dispositions, in order to proportion his graces in this manner to them, and to accommodate them to our weaknesses. I beseech him with all my heart, to infuse that spirit of fear into so many presumptuous souls, who perhaps dishonour devotion by their haughty confidence; but I do not write for them. Neither do I write for those sinners who authorise themselves by the mercy of God, to persevere in their impenitence. There are books enough already for both of them, and it is their business only to profit by them. It even seems in these later times, that more care than ever is taken to intimidate the faithful,

faithful, by laying open to them every thing that is terrifying in religion, and all the severity of the judgments of God. But if it be necessary to intimidate, it is also no less important sometimes to encourage; and since fear has its defects, its excesses, and consequently its dangers, it is requisite that it should also have its remedies.

SECTION IV.

Of the bad Effects of excessive Fear. The first is Discouragement.

I Say that fear has its dangers, and reckon as the first, that discouragement into which it draws those, who give themselves up too far to its impressions. They begin by trouble and agitation, then bitterness comes upon them, and the soul falls into grief. From thence there is but one step to discouragement, and that step is slippery. In this dejection it is very difficult to resist the temptation, which then urges them to abandon a path entirely, wherein they see nothing but what is frightful, and where they gather only thorns. Indeed how can they bear at once, the entire constraint of the senses, the yoke of an exact fidelity, the severity of penance, and the austerity of a hard and painful life, with all the bitterness and grief which an excessive fear may inspire? Man, according to the thoughts
of

of S. Bernard, cannot live upon earth without consolation; and if he be not supported in virtue by some sweetness, it is difficult for him to bear long the constraint it requires of him. *It is necessary, says he, that the unction of grace should assist our infirmity, by anointing the crosses of observances and penance; because no one can follow Christ without the cross, nor bear the severity of the cross without unction.* [Serm. I. Dedic.] It is true that this constraint, and even the rigours of penance, are nothing to him that loves, hopes, and tastes all the sweetnesses which the vivacity of love and the tenderness of confidence can give him. But as to him who has only a terrified heart and a timid love, who knows not the sweetness which is to be found in confiding in God, alas, how is he to be lamented! This is the most overwhelming state that can be imagined, and the penance which is the least to be born. Thus we often see those souls that are gnawed by grief, and devoured by scruples, seeking sooner or later in the dissipation of pleasures, and in the satisfaction of the senses, a consolation which they could not find in piety, because they knew it only by its austere and frightening contents.

I say moreover, this fear which I am speaking of, not only drags towards discouragement, but even produces it by the weakness it causes in him who experiences that state. In common enterprises confidence is a part of the

the means which are employed in order to succeed, at least it animates them all, and gives them a new vigour. Fearful troops are half conquered; on the contrary, the confidence of those soldiers that go to battle, redoubles their ardour and fortifies their courage. If it be thus with the success of human affairs, and with war here below, what will it be with the enterprise of salvation? Since it is for us, the soldiers of Jesus Christ, not only a kind of assault and battle, wherein we are victorious only by using great endeavours; but likewise the hope of success is commanded us, as an essential preparation to obtain it. Indeed if there be some human enterprises which deceive hope, and in which the confidence of success is unprofitable, it is not the same with the enterprise of salvation. It may be truly said, that none shall be saved but with hope, and that hope is one of the most efficacious means for working out our salvation. No, it is not in vain that it is written, *by hope we are saved*, and what seems to me to be still more exact, is, that *hope does not confound*. (Rom. viii and iv.)

On the contrary, if confidence be banished from the heart, what will you do with that timid heart? You will make of it a discouraged soldier, that is already half conquered, because he is afraid to be so; and will very soon fly from before his enemy, because he does not think himself strong enough to resist him.

him. He will resemble those Israelites who were destined in their sojourn in the desert, to be the figure of the christian people, and who by their dreadful timidity were the figure of those that are discouraged by fear. Sometimes they were frightened with hearing the voice of God, and could not bear it: *Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we should die.* (Exod. ii.) Sometimes they were intimidated with the sight of armed chariots, and the warlike troops of the people they had to fight against: *We cannot ascend to the mountains, since the Chanaanites use iron chariots.* (Jof. xvii.) In like manner it is that those fearful souls, weakened by their own timidity, are terrified; sometimes with the obstacles of virtue, and sometimes with the severity of the judgments of God; and that they soon fall under a weight which they think they are not able to bear.

SECTION V.

The second dreadful Effect of this Fear, is Grief of the Heart; the Danger of that State.

IF fear does not amount to discouragement, it will at least produce grief of the heart, a necessary effect of that immoderate fear. Now this is enough to render it perilous, and even dreadful. As a convincing proof of this, I could shew how injurious this grief is to God, who loves to be served with a gay and con-

contented heart: *God loves a chearful giver;* (2 Cor. ix.) and requires that the offerings he receives from us be seasoned with the joy of the heart. *How can I appear before God,* said the holy Pontif Aaron in time of old, to excuse himself from offering the sacrifice of his ministry in a time of mourning, *How can I please the Lord in ceremonies with a mournful mind?* (Levit. x.) Indeed nothing is less agreeable to a father that loves his children tenderly, than to see them about him always in grief, and to correspond to his caresses only with fear, seriousness, and silence. Does not God, who assumes the character of a father in our regard, and who by his tenderness, according to the noble expression of *Tertullian*, *is more a father than all the fathers of the earth*, require our correspondence to his caresses with confidence and joy?

I could shew likewise, how injurious this grief is to piety, of which it gives worldly people a frightful idea, which disgusts them of it. For what ought a man to think, who neither knows the sweets of virtue, nor the joys of penance, when he sees nothing in those that live a holy life but an austere outside, a wrinkled forehead, a gloomy look, a heart disturbed with endless scruples, and a mind overflowed with grief; a mind which only possesses frightful ideas of the justice of God, which speaks of nothing but the rigour of his vengeance, and has only menacing words

words in its mouth? Is not this enough to deter him for ever from embracing a state which seems so grievous and so painful?

However I do not insist upon these two proofs, I shall limit myself to what more particularly regards my subject. I am speaking of that weakness which fear operates in the heart of him who gives himself up to it with excess, a weakness which grief necessarily augments. I will have no other proofs of it than the testimony of the scripture itself: *In the grief of the mind, says the wise man, the spirit is dejected.* (Prov. xv.) And in another place, he says, *banish grief far from thee,* as an evil which you ought to fear the approaches of. And why so? *Because grief has ruined many.* (Eccles. xxx.) And again, *as the moth eats the cloaths, and the worm eats the wood, so the grief of man gnaws his heart.* (Prov. xxv.)

If fear, and grief which it produces, are so dreadful during the course of this life, where both of them are moderated by so many remedies, what will they be at the approaches of death, when those sentiments, as I have said, will be more lively by the presence of the objects which excite them, and when the devil strives with the whole extent of his fury to augment the impression of them? Neither can I sufficiently fear for those sorrowful and terrified souls, whom scrupulosity has been devouring all their lives, who never would taste the consolation of confidence, and who are

are filled only with the terrible ideas of the justice of God; I cannot, I say, fear enough for them, when I see them on their death-bed; because there is nothing but a very powerful grace which can deliver them from the temptation of despair. For at that time; what new occasions of fear, and perhaps of discouragement, will there be for those souls that are so very fearful? When they see at once all those faults of their lives, every one of which in particular might have furnished them with an inexhaustible matter of pain and scruple, when they cast their eyes upon all those failings and infidelities which they think they have committed, upon all those sacraments which they think they have received unworthily, upon all those graces which they have abused, and upon all those omissions which they think themselves guilty of, and which the devil exaggerates the enormity and number of to them? What a seising will it be to them when they take a near view of those judgments of God, which at such a distance seemed already so terrifying, and which are certainly a thousand times more so when we are just ready to undergo all the rigour of them, when we touch them with the hand, as one may say, and look upon ourselves as going to be overwhelmed with them? Experience teaches us that all imaginable pains are to be taken to recover at that time the most holy souls, and even those that have had the most
lively

lively sensations of confidence and love upon the mercies of God. What then will it be with those who all their life time have had nothing but thoughts of dread and terrour, who have been fed, as one may say, only with the bread of bitterness, and who have scarce known their God otherwise than by his judgments and rigours? How will they not cry out with those discouraged Jews, *Our iniquities are upon us, and we languish in them; how then can we live?* (Ezech. xxxiii.)

SECTION VI.

The third dreadful Effect of Fear, the weakening of Tenderneſs in the Love of God. We ſhall firſt ſhow how neceſſary this Tenderneſs is. The firſt Proof.

SUCH are in part the grievous effects which fear produces when we ſet no bounds to it, when we do not ſupport it with the conſolations of hope, and when we do not take care to join with it inſeparably the remembrance of the mercy and juſtice of God, and equally to ſing like *David* the praiſes of thoſe two attributes, the prudent mixture of which is the whole œconomy of our ſalvation; *Mercy and judgment I will ſing to thee, O Lord.* (Pf. c.) But this is not yet all the evil that fear may occaſion. I will explain another evil which is leſs known, but no leſs real. This is the weakening

ening of divine love, which never has, in my opinion, the vivacity it would have, if it were supported with the tenderness of confidence; because I maintain that the surest method to obtain the perfection of this virtue, is to have a feeling of all the sweetness there is in hope. I even believe that it is confidence which partly gives to charity its vivacity, its fruitfulness, its consolation, and its tenderness.

Examine indeed, what is the nature, extent, and effect of divine love in a heart that is inflamed with it. Few people have that idea of it which they ought to have. The faithful are accustomed to form to themselves sublime ideas upon religion, they are taught to reason to infinity even upon the love of God; but they are taught very little how to know that love. The obligation of loving God was never so much talked of, and perhaps one of the finest characters of the perfection of this love was never less known. This character consists in *its tenderness*. Worldlings know the dreadful tenderesses of profane love; but as to those of divine love, even the pious and devout souls of our age are sometimes ignorant of them; and some wits that boast of elevation, regard them perhaps as weaknesses, or simplicities.

However this is the character which our love towards God should have; which I shall establish by two convincing proofs. The first is, that our love is a *love of acknowledgment*,
which

which corresponds to that love which God has had for us from all eternity, and to that which Jesus Christ has given us proofs of in time. A love consequently which ought to resemble that love of our God, and which ought even to be equal to it, if that were possible. It ought at least to be formed according to the sentiments which God has had for us. Now what tenderness has not our God had for us in his love? O how I love to represent him to myself such as he shews himself to us in the holy scriptures! sometimes as a *father that carries his son in his arms*, (Isa. xlv.) and who to have him continually before his eyes, promises to carry him always in the same manner, without being wearied with that weight, which is become still more heavy by his ingratitude. *Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, who are carried in my bosom, I will carry you until old age, and until grey hairs; I have made you, I will bear you, I will carry you, and will save you.* Sometimes as a *nurse that presses her child to her breast*, and who without being provoked with its importunate cries, caresses it, embraces it, and exhausts herself to nourish it. *And I carried them in my arms as the nurse of Ephraim, and they knew not that I took care of them.* (Osee xi.) *Can a woman forget her child, so as not to pity the son of her womb.* (Isa. xlix.) Sometimes as a *shepherd*, that is afflicted for having lost the sheep which he cherished, and fatigues himself in seeking it. *I am the good shepherd, &c.* (Jo. x.)

(Jo. x.) *He goes after the sheep that was lost until he finds it, and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders and rejoices.* (Luk. xv.) O how I love to read in those sacred books the sweet invitations of this God of goodness, who urges us to *give him all our heart*, (Prov. xxiii.) who asks us only for the tenderness of our heart, and who to merit it offers us his own first, and all the love he is capable of. If the inquietudes of love are the best proof of its vivacity and tenderness, he has been pleased to give us a picture of those he feels, when he calls us, and when he waits for us. He asks himself, *have I done enough, what more could I do for my vine, and have not done it?* (Isa. v.) He says it as it were with groans to all creatures, he takes them to witness his earnest cares, he makes them the confidants of his inquietudes, he amorously complains to them of the small success of his love, and of our slowness to love him. *I sought a man that might put a hedge between, and might stand opposite against me, lest I should disperse them, and I found none.* (Ezech. xxii.) O how amiable is a God that groans, a God that could thunder, and contents himself with complaining. His complaints and reproaches even prove, in my opinion, the tenderness of his love, as much as his benefits and caresses do.

As to my part, I confess it is difficult not to be touched with them even to tears, especially when we see also the Son of God weeping
(x. 01)

ing with tenderness for us, and over us. He sees, says the gospel, the city of Jerusalem, and he sees in that city a figure of the church which he is come to institute; he sees in it an image of the state of our hearts, which he desires to gain; and his love immediately makes him shed tears over it, (Luk. xix.) and at the same time over every one of us. He weeps bitterly over our insensibilities, he weeps with affliction over our wanderings, he weeps with compassion over our pains, he weeps with inquietude over our conflicts, he weeps with joy over our crowns, finally he weeps because a father cannot restrain his tears, when he sees a son again that he loves, and that he thought he had lost. Such is the love of our God. Ought not a love which should correspond by its gratitude to that paternal love, to have the same tenderness? If the prodigal child had not mingled his tears with those which his father shed over him, would he have been worthy of being received by him with so much mercy?

SECTION VII.

The second proof of the tenderness our love ought to have towards God. It is confidence which excites these sentiments of tenderness.

THe second reason is, that our love is not only a love of gratitude, but also a

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love

love of complaisance, such as it ought to be between spouses : for that is the rank which God gives to our souls, and the title he vouchsafes to take in their regard. Now, what ought that love to be, but a love of the heart, which ought to exhaust all the desires of the heart, all the affections of the heart ? How could we except the tenderness of the heart from the plenitude of that love ? What do I say, is not that the most delicate part in the sentiments of the heart, and consequently the most perfect part of divine love ?

This instruction regards all men, but chiefly those whose hearts are the most lively, and more easily feel all the impressions of tenderness, which love or friendship may inspire. Indeed is it possible that they should be so sensible towards creatures, and that they could dispense themselves from being sensible to the love of our God ? A person is so tender towards a friend, a benefactor, and a father ; a mother is solicitous for her son, and a wife for her husband. The presence of what one loves opens and dilates the heart, it then swims in joy, it is content, and transported. Absence occasions complaint, inquietude and weariness ; it spreads bitterness over what can be most delightful in the pleasures of life ; danger augments inquietudes, and nothing can calm them ; loss changes them into despair ; then the person groans, is afflicted, refuses nourishment, and cannot even bear

bear the light ; he will employ himself no longer in any thing but weeping and complaining. By these marks I discover the tenderness of the heart, and the vivacity of that love with which it was filled.

Why is it then, that this heart which is so sensible, shall not have the same love for its God, or that his love shall not produce the the same sentiments ? It seems to me, that if it be capable of these sentiments, it cannot excuse itself in not having them. Methinks it would be shameful for a man to be so lively towards terrestrial objects, and to have nothing for his God, but a love without sentiment, and a heart without tenderness. I do not even know whether such a love can be called love, or whether it ought not to be regarded as a real indifference.

Therefore it is necessary that we should have this tenderness for our God, or at least that we should desire it, excite it, and endeavour to acquire it. What means is there more proper to form it than the sweet confidence we take in him whose goodness we know, and whose mercies we daily experience ? What motive more weighty to excite in ourselves those sentiments which I am speaking of, than to say to one's self : I have in God a good father that loves me tenderly, who prepares for me an infinite inheritance, and that inheritance is no other than himself. In spite of my miseries and weakness, he de-

fires to render me holy, happy, and eternal, as himself. He knows, indeed, all my wanderings, but yet thro' his goodness he bears with me. He excuses those wanderings, he takes no notice of them, he pardons them ; and how just soever he be, yet in my opinion, he is still more merciful with regard to me.

Thus it was that *St. Paul* excited himself to those tender sentiments, when he said : *I know him whom I have believed, and certain I am.* (2 Tim. 1.) I know who he is in whom I confide. I know his goodness, his fidelity, his mercy, and I am assured I shall not be deceived in my confidence. Then his love, being animated by this motive, thought itself powerful enough to withstand all the most difficult trials. He had the courage to give a generous challenge to the whole universe, to separate him from the charity of his God, wherewith he was transported. *Who then shall separate us from the charity of Jesus Christ.* (Rom. 8.)

Confidence ought to produce the same effect, and the same sentiments, in us. This is even what it naturally produces wherever it is found. I am assured of the fidelity of my friend, both when I think on those marks of friendship he has given me in difficult occasions, and on the helps that I have received from him ; when I see those that he designs for me at the time wherein I may be found in trouble, I feel my attachment and friendship redouble

redouble, my whole heart exhausts itself in sentiments for him. I am assured of the goodness of my father, and when I see the rich inheritance which he is preparing for me, the cordiality with which he speaks to me, with which he instructs and corrects me, and the facility with which he receives me, even after my wanderings, I feel all my tenderness redouble for him. I am assured of the affection of my prince, and when I think on the particular word he has given me to remember my fortune, when I see the care he takes to grant me, on every occasion, the favours that offer, that he often prevents my desires to do me a service, I feel my zeal and fidelity redouble. I would go to the wars, into an engagement, to a dangerous assault, to give him a proof of it; and I think one cannot love so good a King too well, nor do too much for him. Thus it is with much more reason, when I think on what my God does for me, on what he can do, on what he promises, on what he gives, on what he bears with, on what he excuses, on what he has already given me, and on what he will give me very shortly, that I feel myself inflamed with a new ardour. This is what confidence in his goodness inspires me with; and if there were the least coldness in me, I would have nothing but the remembrance of his mercy to confound it, and to renew my love towards him.

Thus it was that St. *Ignatius* the martyr

judged of it, that divine man who ought so well to know the characters and force of that holy love, wherewith he was so much inflamed. Who writing to the *Magnesians* he felicitates them for having shewn *the whole extent of their love towards God, and towards Jesus Christ, in the plenitude of the hope they had in him.* Indeed, it is this merciful goodness of our God, which induces us more sensibly to love him. It is that confidence which it inspires us with that gives to love its sweetness and force. There is that little morsel of leaven mentioned in the gospel, which enlivens the whole paste, and gives it taste and perfection: *The Kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman having taken, hid it in three measures of flour, till the whole was leavened.* (Matt. 13.) There, in a word, is that spirit of adoption mentioned by St. Paul, which we have received in Jesus Christ that teaches us not to tremble as slaves, but to love like children, to invoke our father with confidence, to serve him without inquietude, and to expect in peace the bread of nourishment which his tenderness designs for us. For, says this apostle, *we have not received a spirit of servitude in fear; but the spirit of adoption of the children of God, in which we cry Abba, father.* (Rom. 8.)

SECTION VIII.

*This Tenderneſs of Divine Love is deſtroyed by
Diffidence and Fear.*

SUCH is the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and ſuch is its perfection; but what does the tempter? Whether he watches to caſt a juſt perſon into trouble, whether he watches to retain a ſinner in ſin, whether he watches to deſtroy a dying perſon by deſpair, he endeavours to deſtroy this holy Confidence in all hearts, in order to ruin all the fruit it might produce therein. He repreſents with exaggeration to a timid ſoul, the multitude of faults which he might have committed, he diſcovers to him all the enormity of them, he throws him into ſcruples upon every one of his confeſſions, he diſturbſ him with the moſt frightful temptations, and he immediately makes every leaſt deliberate thought a crime in him. Diſcovering to him at the ſame time how ſevere the judgments of God are, he endeavours to perſuade him that there is no pardon for him; that God being provoked with his infidelities, refuſes him his Graces, and abandons him; and that he is of the number of the hardened and the reprobate. If that deſolate ſoul hear any menace, or any reproach, directed in general to impenitent ſinners, the tempter tells him interiorly, it is to him that God has ordered theſe words to

be address'd, and that the chastisements are prepared for him. If he hear any words of consolation, to them he adds dreadful reflexions, and despairing thoughts, which hinder that soul from making the application, and from reaping the fruit of them. If he be faithful enough to resist the temptation of despair into which he drives him, the tempter succeeds at least in disturbing, and casting him into an inquietude and a mortal grief. Thus that poor heart, tempted, disturbed, and desolate, scarce knows in this state what part to take, where he sees nothing before his eyes, but occasions of fear, and in himself nothing but monsters and darkness.

It is easy to perceive how many obstacles this diffidence, and this grief of the heart, bring to the vivacity and tenderness of the love of God, such as I have just described it. For behold how I reason with a soul that abandons himself to those dreadful thoughts: All your grief proceeds only from your diffidence of the mercy of God, which you dare not hope for. Now the cause of this diffidence can only be the doubts you harbour, either of the omnipotence of God, or of his good will towards you. Undoubtedly it is not upon his omnipotence that you hesitate, for you readily believe that your salvation is not difficult to him; therefore your doubt and your fear fall only upon his good will towards you. You can hardly believe
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he will save you ; you are afraid lest he should not pardon you ; you think he does not love you so much as others whom he has saved ; and you imagine that his mercy, exhausted in your favour, has given place to justice and vengeance. What a repulse do these doubts and ideas bring to the love which ought to be in your heart, the most pressing motive of which ought to be, that this God of goodness loves you, though a sinner, though miserable as you are ; that he loves you enough to call you, to receive you, and to pardon you ? For my part, O my God, this is the thing that mollifies me the most, and has the most sensible effect upon me. If I were holy, if I were perfect, and if I were just, it seems to me that I should have the less reason to admire thy goodness. But what astonishes me, and augments my love for thee, with my gratitude, is that in spite of my miseries, thou still lovest me. That though a sinner, though ungrateful, and though faithless, as I am, I should still in this state be the object of thy earnestness, and of thy benefits. This softens the hardness of my heart, it can no longer resist this.

Thus thinks, as it were naturally, a heart supported by confidence. But what will become of these sentiments of love, in him that shall falsely believe that he loves his God in vain, and that this provoked God has nothing more for him but severity and chastisements ;

who persuades himself that his Sins are at their height, and shall not be pardoned any more from henceforth? Must he even be quite in despair, because he finds the utter ruin of love in those grievous thoughts? Is not the doubt alone upon the infinite goodness of God sufficient to trouble, to grieve, and cool the heart, in proportion as he finds his confidence diminish?

SECTION IX.

A Continuation of the same Subject. The Difference between two Souls, one of which is governed by Love, and the other is more sensible to fear. The Portrait of the first.

IN order to give to the truth we have just laid down all the light it can require, and to make it be conceived in a more sensible manner, let us consider, if you please, the difference there is between two just souls, but who go towards God by different paths; one by the way of confidence, and the other by that of fear.

The one loves God tenderly and cordially, as a son loves his father, or as a wife lives with her husband that she loves. His love augments his confidence, and his confidence nourishes his love. God, says he, is good, he is my father; and this teaches me not to provoke him. But if any infidelity escape me,

me, I have recourse to him with confidence, because I know his bounties are greater than my ingratitude. I know he is terrible in his wrath; but I know also that this wrath is not proof against a humbled heart. It is just to fear him; but he appears still to me more amiable than terrible. I have a thousand times experienced, that he readily pardons him that invokes him; and shall never despair of experiencing it again. In spite of my weakness, he will support me with his grace. That grace was merited for me by the blood of my saviour, and in order to participate more abundantly in it, I will hide myself in his wounds, and cover myself with his merits. This soul, having these sentiments, leads an austere and painful life, that he may please God; but his austerity is not diffused in his humour: he is gay, content, and even agreeable in society. His virtue has nothing gloomy; and the tears which contrition makes him shed, are mingled with a certain sweetness which renders them aimable. In this state he loves to approach Jesus Christ by the sacraments, and especially by holy communion. It is a joy to this soul which he cannot express, to possess his God that he loves, and to unite himself intimately to him. In truth, it is with confusion that he approaches him, knowing how great this God is, and seeing nothing in himself but misery; yet this confusion does not stop him, and his

fear yields to his love, because he believes this is more agreeable to the heart of his spouse.

This fervour is maintained in the midst of the most difficult occasions, and the most violent temptations. This soul walks with long strides *in the ways of the commandments of his God, he even runs swiftly,* according to the expression of the prophet, in those thorny tracts, where so many others meet with rocks. What makes him run in this manner, is that holy joy which confidence animates him with. *That joy dilates his heart,* and transports it. [Ps. cxviii. 32.] He elevates himself to God, being carried upon the wings of confidence and love; and from the height of his elevation, he despises the world and its attractives, the devils with their wiles, and seems no longer to feel the weight of nature, nor that of concupiscence.

His holy ardours are redoubled at the remembrance of death. Alas! says he, O my God, and the God of my heart, when will that moment come, that I shall see thee without a veil, that I shall possess thee without division, that I shall praise thee without interruption, and that I shall love thee without tepidity; break, O Lord, the bonds that retain me, *bring my soul out of its prison,* and take from me a life in which I continually offend thee, and possess thee but by halves. [Ps. cxli.] The approaches and the presence of that death, so frightful to all men, do but inflame

flame his fervour. Ah! cries he, my exile is going to have an end. I shall therefore at last enjoy the possession of my God, and I am going to rest in his bosom. My heart being freed from its prison, and delivered from its slavery, shall see what the eye has never seen, and shall possess that happiness whose delights the heart of man has never conceived! O my God, and my father, still anticipate that moment which will never come soon enough according to my desires! I know that thy justice will find much in me to be provoked with, and to punish me for; but I unite myself to Jesus Christ, by whom thou hast saved me, and in whom I love thee. It is in his merits alone that I confide, and not upon my own works, which are nothing of themselves. It is through his blood that I beg for mercy of thee, and hope to obtain it. In this sweet hope, that soul abandons itself to the rigours of sickness, and receives from death the last stroke, which consummates its sacrifice.

SECTION X.

The Portrait of another just Man who is governed chiefly by Fear.

THE other just man, whom I am speaking of, is very different. He would willingly love his God, and does indeed love him;

him; but being uneasy about his love, he dares not say to himself that he loves him truly. Attentive to all the faults he has committed, and may daily commit; ingenious in forming new sins to himself; and subtle in his refinements upon scrupulosity; he exaggerates to himself every fault that he either has, or thinks he has committed. He forgets the mercy which pardons them, and only thinks on the justice that punishes them. God is for him a provoked God, and a terrible God. He lives with him, not as a child with a good father, or as a virtuous wife with an amiable husband; but as a domestic with a master, and a severe and angry master, who sees all, and pardons nothing.

In truth, he walks with fidelity in the paths of salvation, and of the commandments of God; but it is with grief and heaviness. At every moment he stops, to foresee temptations. He sometimes excites them by the strength of the fear he has of them, and augments them by the greatness of his struggle against them. There is no victory but what furnishes him with a thousand kinds of scruples. All costs him dear, all is painful to him, because joy does not support him.

In this state he can scarce resolve to approach the sacraments. Persuaded of his own indignity, he imagines he profanes them, instead of being purified by them. He trembles every time he is obliged to present himself

self to the tribunal of penance; and disturbed upon the examen of his sins, upon his accusation of them, and upon the quality and measure of his contrition, he puts his mind to the rack, to exhaust it of every precaution. His scruples multiplying to excess, and never ceasing, make a horrible chaos of his conscience, where he perceives himself to be nothing but darkness. The holy communion frightens him no less; and all the authority of an able director is requisite to oblige him to approach his God: yet terror often prevails over obedience, and the fear of provoking God by his unworthiness, which he has constantly before his eyes, prevents his going to him, notwithstanding the sweet invitations of that God of goodness, who is pleased to unite himself to us. Those troubles and fears redouble at the remembrance of death. He has scarce any other idea of God, than that of a just and avenging God. He knows it is terrible to fall into the arms of his wrath, and looks with dread upon that moment, which is to make him appear before him. His alarms increase in proportion as that moment approaches: he would willingly set it at a distance, not out of attachment to life, but because he regards the end of it, as the terrible entrance to an eternity, where he sees nothing but fire and punishments, which he imagines are destined for him.

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It is easy to perceive, that the two portraits I have made, are not portraits made at random, nor portraits of the imagination. We may discover in the first, so many faints, whose transports, fervour, and tranquility, astonish us, when we read what their histories relate to us of them; and perhaps many devout and timorous souls will be able to discover themselves in the second. But whatever may be the application of them, it is just to draw the consequence from them which I had in view.

I do not ask here, which of these two states is the happiest, and where the lot is the sweetest; but I ask which of the two is the most perfect. Who is the man that loves the most? Is it he that is transported with *that charity which banishes fear*? [1 John iv.] which of them is the most conformable to the spirit of christianity, that spirit of which we said sometime after *S. Paul*, *that it is not a spirit of fear, but a spirit of adoption and tenderness*? [Rom. viii.]

I ask in fine, which of these two states is the most glorious to God, the most agreeable to God, and most according to the heart of God. Can it be doubted but that it is the first? For does God require any thing else of us, than those dispositions of tenderness, joy, and confidence, which I have described in it?

SECTION XI.

Those that are conducted by Love and Confidence, ought to be most agreeable to God, and most conformable to the true Spirit of Christianity.

LET us judge of what we have just said, by the ideas which nature itself gives us, and let us bear the judgment upon it which reason alone teaches us to form. Which should we ourselves prefer, if the question were about our service? It seems to me, that we should prefer a man that is full of affection and fervour, to another that would only approach us with grief, and serve us only with fear. Indeed, which do we love best, either to make ourselves be loved, or to make ourselves be feared? What can the most noble ambition be inclined to? Is it to gain to itself forced respects, and such as are exacted by fear and terror? Voluntary homages inspired by love, and dictated by gratitude, appear to me infinitely more precious. He that should know how to chain all hearts, would, in my opinion, be far more admirable, than he that could subdue all nations. If those famous conquerors mentioned in history, were ambitious to become masters of the world by the terror of their arms, it was undoubtedly because of their impossibility to conquer it by the charms of love.

Behold

Behold what reason alone dictates to us ; but ought not this very reason, fortified by faith, to make us discover that our God, infinitely more equitable than we, finds that it is more glorious for him to gain our hearts by love, than to subdue them by fear ? Indeed this God who is so good, and could constrain us to serve him, is pleased to content himself with inviting us, with urging us, and with drawing us, to his service, by the sweetness of his love. *He has left, says S. Peter Chrysologus, he has left it seems, his quality of a master, to take that of a father ; because he rather chuses to reign over us by love, than by power.* He therefore takes the quality of a father, and if this quality has yet any thing that is too majestic for us, he adds to it that of a spouse, that of a friend, and that of a saviour. He gives himself to us under the figure of bread, and has shewn himself to men under the form of a child.

Let us reflect a moment upon this last thought, and upon the form taken by the son of God when he came upon earth ; and we shall easily discover what sentiment he chiefly desired to inspire us with ; whether with the sentiment of fear, or with that of confidence. Indeed had he come hither to bring only chastisements and terror, would he have taken a form so sweet, so feeble, so simple, and so amiable ? A child, a little child, that seemed unable to do any thing but by the help of his mother ;

mother ; a child that has nothing but charms and sweetness ; a child, poor, naked, and abandoned, that mollifies us by his tears, and sends forth cries capable of piercing the heart of a barbarian. Alas ! it seems to me, he makes them be heard only to complain because we will not love him, though on his part he makes so many advances. He hides, he disguises, and envelopes, whatever he has that is great and terrible ; he strips himself of all that seems the most inseparable from greatness ; splendor, riches, power, and majesty. It is easy to discover his design. He desires to draw us to him, and to render his access easy to us ; he desires to recover us ; he desires to annihilate all our diffidences and timidities ; he desires to give us so free an admittance to him, that we can have no pretext for separating ourselves from him.

This therefore is the design of God ; and consequently what he requires of us, is love, tenderness, and confidence. Judge now which is the person that corresponds best to his designs, that enters furthest into his views, and imbibes the sentiments which are most agreeable to him ? Is it he that is timid, is frightened, and is but with difficulty recovered ? Or else, is it he that is full of a respectful confidence ; that loves him, and being humble in his love, tastes all the sweetness that tenderness can make him find in it. For my part, I think that the tribute of greatness and majesty,

majesty, is fear ; but that the tribute of goodness, is confidence and love. Since our God shews himself to us as a God whose goodness makes him amiable, it is therefore by love and confidence that we must approach to him.

SECTION XII.

Other Proofs of the foregoing Truth. Three solid Grounds of our Confidence. The chief is the Goodness of God.

LET us complete the giving a new light to this truth, and in order to discover more and more the spirit of christianity upon that confidence I am speaking of, let us study here again whatever is most proper to manifest to us the value, the solidity, the necessity, the fruits, and the advantages of it ; and especially the consolation which inseparably attends it, and is, as one may say, its proper character : it will be easy for us afterwards to remove those doubts raised by timid souls, and to answer their objections.

What I will first consider, are the solid grounds of that tender confidence, with which I would willingly inspire all the just. What are those grounds ? The infallible truth of God, the omnipotence of God, and the infinite goodness of God : can our confidence find more immovable supports ?

He that puts his confidence in man, is cursed, in the scripture. [Jerem. xvii.] Among the reasons

reasons which render him condemnable, may be said to be the imprudence of that confidence which relies upon too frail a foundation, which can only deceive his vain hopes. For what good, and what help can be expected from him that generally wants either truth, or will, or power? Such is man here below. His heart is full of deceit and malignity. He seldom has a mind to do good; he promises to do it, and his promises are false. If he intends it sincerely, it is but weakly; if he designs it earnestly, it is not constantly; and though he should be willing to do it sincerely, earnestly, and constantly, even though he were willing to take all manner of care to succeed, yet his good-will is often fruitless. His will is exhausted in vain desires, because its too limited power does not follow his heart; and if his friendship has no bounds, his power has such narrow ones, that he cannot do much for him that he loves. Consequently what a folly is it for a man to put his confidence in him from whom he has so little help to expect!

Now what is wanting in man, is the very thing we find in God alone. An eternal, immutable, and infallible truth, who is as far from deceit as from nothingness; and who promises nothing but what he performs with more magnificence than he promised it. A power which has no bounds, which every thing obeys in heaven, on earth, and even in

in hell ; who changes the elements, and annihilates creatures, if he pleases ; who carries the world in his hand, according to the noble expression of the scripture. In the midst of the majesty which that power gives, and which exalts him so greatly in our eyes, we still find a heart full of tenderness towards us, which bears us a love as infinite as his power, and makes us sensible of all the benefits that love can invent to enrich us, and of all the mercy that goodness can have to pardon us. Three things, said *St. Bernard*, animate my hope ; the truth of God, that makes me promises ; the power of God, to whom the execution of his promises is easy ; and the charity of God, who adopts me for his child. The truth of God, that promises me all the riches which adoption can make me hope for ; the power of God, whom those riches cannot impoverish ; the adoption of God, which gives me a right to expect them, to ask for them, and to obtain them. [*Lib. de diligendo Deo.*]

I will not dwell here on what regards the truth and power of God, the first foundations of our hope. The just man and the sinner, who doubt not of them, would gather little fruit from the care we might take to convince them thereof. It is more profitable for them to speak of his goodness, which people know in the bulk, but which they do not sufficiently meditate upon.

But

But what? Shall I undertake to search into the depth of that goodness and mercy? Is it not an ocean which has no bottom, and whose bounds we cannot behold? Would it not be rashness to attempt to drain it? What shall I say upon the production of all those creatures that God has subjected to our necessities, that he has even created for our amusements and our pleasures? *He has not only provided for our necessities,* says S. Peter Chrysologus, *but his tenderness would even provide for our delights.* What shall I say upon that continual providence, which by a thousand wonderful machinations, preserves us, supports us, defends us, protects us, and procures us favourable moments for our salvation? What shall I say upon that admiral redemption of a God made man, to render us happy by his tears and his sufferings, to procure us rest by his labours, and to give us life at the expence of his own? Let us say it boldly, with S. Leo, to communicate to us a share of his divinity, to place us upon his throne, and to make us, as one may say, so many Gods.

These benefits are common among all men; they are prepared for all; but they shew no less the goodness of God. On the contrary, they shew more clearly the infinite extent of that goodness, which does not even entirely exclude the hardened and ungrateful, from those helps which he is pleased to give to all, because he loves us all. Moreover though these
benefits

benefits be common, yet they are in a particular sense for every one of us, because they are applied to each of us, as if there were none but us upon earth to profit by them. That love which prepared them for us is a personal love, which distinguishing us all, as a shepherd *that calls every one of his sheep by the name* he has given it, [Jo. x.] loves every one of us in particular, as if there were none but us that he could love. Yes undoubtedly, all the greatness there is in the creation of the universe, all that is consolatory in providence, all the riches possessed by omnipotence, all that is magnificent in the eternal recompence, and all the tenderness there is in the redemption, in the sufferings, in the blood, and in the death of Jesus Christ, all this belongs to us, and belongs to every one of us in particular, as if there were but that person upon earth. This deserves, I do not say, our astonishment and our gratitude, these terms are too common for such great benefits; but our raptures, our transports, and our extasies. Let others assist me in finding out some stronger terms to express such sentiments as may correspond to so many bounties.

SECTION XIII.

The Goodness of God is most sensible in his Tenderness towards Sinners.

THE impossibility of making the greatness of so many benefits perceptible, obliges me, as you see, to speak of them only in general. There is but one thing upon which I cannot be silent; which is that continual goodness wherewith God manages the conversion of the sinner. He seeks him, he calls him in particular, as if there were but him upon earth, that he would gain. He waits for him, he receives him, he pardons him. It is this continual, and, as one may say, personal mercy, which I cannot be weary with admiring, and which, in my opinion, ought most to interest our hope.

What is it to love man, but to call him, to seek him, to caress him, and to load him with all manner of benefits at the very time of his wandering and of his sin? Is not this carrying tenderness to its utmost bounds? That God should love men whom he has created, seems just; they are his creatures, and the work of his hands, and on this account they may, as one may say, deserve his attention. That he loves them though they be fallen from the state of innocence, and into that of misery to which they are reduced by the sin of their first father; in that state which they owe

to their origin alone, alas! they are more worthy of pity, than of wrath; and I am not so surpris'd that a God of goodness should have sentiments of compassion for them. But that men not only sinners in their origin, but who, by a continual malice, add contempt to their crimes, and insult to contempt; who abuse the very benefits of God to make war against him; who authorise themselves by his patience to augment their rebellion and insolence; that men, I say, in this state, should be the object of God's tenderness, that he should love them, should suffer them, should caress them, as one may say, and should fill them with benefits, is what a God alone can do, and what man cannot comprehend.

And this is what the author of *Ecclesiasticus* could not be weary with admiring. It is true, says he, that in one sense it may be said, the mercy of God upon sinners is limited; since he has determined the course of it to that of their life, which does not reach so far as a hundred years; *the number of the days of men at most is a hundred years, and they are reputed as drops of water of the sea. Because God is patient towards them, and will pour his mercy upon them.* [Ecclef. xviii.] and by fixing thus the number of their days, he seems to have prescribed narrow bounds to the duration of his bounties; but he desires to make us sensible in another manner of the whole extent of them, by the infinite abundance of graces which he bestows

bestows on us. He not only gives us some share in his mercy, but, as one may say, he pours it out entirely, and with profusion. He hastens to prevent the moment, which by terminating our life, is to begin the reign of his justice over us; he is speedy, as if he were afraid of being surprised by it. In spite of our rebellions, he ceases not to love us, to bear with us, to call us, and to heap his benefits upon us. *He takes no notice of them; because the time is short, and he is desirous that every moment of ours should be stamped with some new mark of his mercy.* However he is not ignorant that *our ungrateful and lofty heart takes occasion from this goodness to nourish its presumption, and to authorise itself in its malice: he sees it, and is witness to it; because he penetrates the secret recesses of our soul, and discovers all the corruption of it.* So unworthy a spectacle ought to weary his patience; but yet *that patience is not dejected, and of our consummate malice he makes an occasion of consummating his infinite mercy upon us: [Eccles. xviii.]* for instead of provoking his wrath, it only excites his compassion. He disputes in goodness with that ungrateful creature, and continually hopes to overcome it by his caresses. We are proud, he humbles us. We are insensible, he mollifies us. We are chained, he breaks our bonds. We fly from him, he pursues us. There is no time, no place, no occasion, no disposition, but what he pro-

fits of, to make us hear his voice. In proportion as we make rebellious marches to remove from him, he makes merciful marches to overtake us.

This is what the wise man admired; and this is what we are daily sensible of. Let us say it to our confusion: this is the portrait of the obstinate rebellion of our heart, and of the infinite mercies of our God. But though I am sensible of them every moment, though all sinners be sensible of them as well as me, yet this is what neither they nor I shall ever comprehend. *What then is man*, shall I here cry out with the prophet: *What then is man, O my God!* whom thou takest so much care of, and crownest with so many benefits? [*Job. vii.*] What, but a nothing, a breath of life, a heap of corruption taken from nothing, and is to be reduced into dust? An unsettled mind, light, and inconstant, full of ignorance and darkness. But what is he with relation to thee? A rebellious and ungrateful thing, who after having been thy enemy before he was born, has a thousand times had a mind to return, by his own malice, into the state of rebellion he was in by his origin, and from which thou hadst taken him. Is this then, O my God! the object of thy solicitude and care? *In him thou placest thy love* and thy tenderness. Alas! was it not enough for him in that state to be the object of thy compassion?

Yes undoubtedly, it was enough for us; and yet he has made us the object of his caresses

resses and his complacencies. It is this goodness of God which astonishes me, and mollifies me more than all the rest of his mercies. Does there want any thing else to excite the strongest confidence in us? At the remembrance of this, what will become of all that excites our timidity and fears? Can our diffidencies have any foundation, when we find such a solid foundation to have them no more? Do we not seem to hear this God of mercy himself saying to every one of us, what he caused his prophet to say to the beloved people: *behold what thy God says to thee, the God of Jacob and the creator of Israel, fear not, because I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine, and I will be with thee when thou shalt pass through the waters.* (It is known that in the prophetic style, the waters are afflictions and temptations.) *When thou shalt pass through the waters, the waves shall not overflow thee, and when thou shalt pass through the fire, it shall not hurt thee, for I am with thee, and I am thy saviour. Hear, my servant, says he, and a little after, I have chosen thee. It is I that have formed thee in the womb of thy mother. Thou hast experienced my bounties, fear not.* [Isa. xliii. xlv.] What greater reason to be encouraged, than to hear God himself saying kindly to us, *fear not?* Can we hesitate to hope for all from him who prevents us to give us all? Happy is man that finds so much mercy in God, and so much reason to

confide in him ! But more happy still, because he not only can confide in his God with assurance, but even because this God of goodness requires his confidence, and is offended if he be refused it, or if too narrow bounds be given to that confidence which he expects ! Here we must add, that this confidence I am speaking of is not only solid, but seems to be absolutely indispensable, and is one of the most urgent duties of Christianity.

SECTION XIV.

This confidence is not only established upon solid foundations, but it seems to be of an indispensable obligation. The care God takes to excite it in us.

NOTHING is more clearly shewn in the sacred books, than the obligation of opening our hearts to this holy confidence ; the whole scripture, it seems, tends only to excite in us that sentiment so just, and so consolatory to us. Why so many portraits of the mercy and infinite goodness of God, who receives, and excuses the sinner, and pardons him that returns sincerely to him ? Why so great assurance that God loves us tenderly, that it is his delight to dwell among us, that he desires to save us all, and would have none to perish ; and that he manages the temptations so, as that they may not be above our weakness ? Why all those affecting

affecting histories, symboles, and parables? Sometimes it is a mother that holds her child in her arms, and is not wearied with its importunities. Sometimes it is a spouse that invites his faithless bride to return to him after her going astray, and promises to receive her. Sometimes it is a father who prevents a prodigal and libertine son by his caresses. Sometimes it is an adulterer, a publican, a thief, a woman of bad life, whose sins he pardons, and to whom he opens the gates of Heaven. Why then so many instructions, if it be free for us to reject the consolations they offer us? And since God takes so much care to excite our confidence, is it not resisting his designs, to be obstinate in our diffidences, and to nourish ourselves in our timidities?

On the other hand, I see in the holy Scripture, not only a law of hoping in God; but I even see that this law annexes graces and recompences to that consummate hope I am speaking of. *It is for him, says the Scripture, who shall have this holy confidence, that the eternal inheritance is designed, and he shall possess the holy mountain.* [Isa. lvii.] And again, *blessed is he that puts his trust in the Lord, he shall be like a tree planted on the edge of the waters, which make it fertile: it shall bear flowers and fruit according to the season: the droughth shall not hurt it, neither shall it fear the storms.* And also in another place, *because thou hast confidence in me, I will deliver thee.* [Jerem. xvii. and xxxix.]

What ought still the more to animate our fervour, is that the Holy Ghost repeats a thousand times in the Scripture, and says it even with an oath, that he *who hopes is happy*, that he *is blessed of God*; that he *shall not be deceived*, that he *shall not blush*, and that his *confidence shall not turn to his confusion*. What more is wanted to encourage us? Does a God that speaks, a God that promises, a God that affirms, a God that makes an oath, do all this in vain? *Happy man*, shall I say with *Tertullian*, *happy man*, to whom God makes so many promises! And too guilty is that man, if he become incredulous even to the oaths of his God. [L. de pœnit. c. 40.]

Add to all these assurances the invitations of that God of mercy, *who loves our souls*, [Sap. xi.] and *would have none to perish*, but that all should return to penance. [2. Pet. iii.] *Come to me*, says he, *come all to me*. [Matt. xi.] This invitation is general; it does not regard the saints and the perfect only, it excepts no body. But what? Shall not those be excepted, who are overwhelmed under the weight of their iniquities, who have so much difficulty to overcome their passions, who are perpetually struggling against temptations, who are groaning under the weight of worldly affairs, who are employed in mere human occupations, who are overburthened with the intricacies which a family, riches, and lawsuits, continually occasion them? Shall not they

they be rejected as unworthy to be received by a God that is so holy and so pure? No, these are chiefly they whom Jesus calls, whom he invites, and to whom he desires to give his help. *Come to me, says he, you that are in trouble, and are overwhelmed.* [Matt. xi.] You that suffer so many conflicts and resistances, how unworthy soever you be of my help, have confidence, and I will assist you, I will relieve you, I will deliver you, and I will crown you: I shall even find my glory therein. For what soul is it that glorifies the Lord the most, says a prophet? *That which is sorrowful because of the greatness of the sins it has committed, which walks bowed down and dejected under the weight of its iniquities, whose eyes are faint and languishing, which is devoured with hunger and poverty; it is that which, returning to God in its misery, shall give him the greater glory by its return.* [Baruch ii.]

Thus it is that God encourages us in our weakness. Is it then in vain that he invites us thus? Would he press us to throw ourselves into his arms, says S. Augustin; if he had no design to receive us in them? Would not his promises be false and deceitful, if he excepted any one of us from that superabundant mercy which he offers to us all? Does not he that hesitates to throw himself into his arms, that dares not approach to him, and whose fear is greater than his hope,

do an injury to him that has taken so much care to recover him in his diffidences ?

SECTION XV.

It is doing an injury to God, to refuse him that confidence which he requires of us.

IT seems indeed, that it is doing a sensible injury to God, to abandon ourselves to those excessive fears, and to those diffidences, which I am opposing. For what an injury is it to him that endeavours to shew his goodness, to have still a distrust of him ? What an injustice is it to set bounds to a mercy which is infinite ? I do not pretend to authorise those who would carry this confidence up to presumption, and who authorise themselves by that unlimited goodness, to keep no bounds in their iniquities. I have already declared, that it is not for them that I write : they shall be confounded in their expectation, *and their vain hope is an abomination.* [Job. xi.] I speak always according to the principles I have laid down. I speak of that hope which supposes a life, either regulated according to the law of God, or at least has a sincere desire to begin actually to regulate itself according to that holy law. I only speak either for the just who love God, or for sinners who being sincerely desirous of their conversion, hesitate in setting about it at the sight of the multitude
of

of their sins, for fear there should be no mercy to be found with God for them. It is to those that I will raise a scruple upon their diffidences and the excess of their fear; and boldly tell them that it seems to me to be injurious to God.

For, I will say to them, what do you hesitate upon? Is it upon the power of God? But you know his power has no bounds. Is it upon his mercy? But how enormous soever those iniquities be which you see in yourself, is not the infinite mercy of God a thousand times more extensive? Is it upon his promises? But what then! are not his promises sincere? Are they not made for you? Is it upon the particular good will he has for you? Are you therefore ignorant that God is your father, that he loves you, that he gives himself to you, that he sincerely desires to save you, and that this God *the lover of our souls* has your salvation more at heart, than you have yourself? Is not the doubting of any of these truths, a wanting submission to the truths which faith teaches us: since that power of God, that truth of God, that assurance of the promises of God, and that goodness of our God which is so extensive, are truths so clearly taught and so solidly established, that they ought not to be called in question? At least, it is offending the mercy of God, to allow it too narrow bounds; since that mercy is not only infinite, but even its particular glory consists

sists in being more abundant than all the iniquities of the earth.

Moreover to speak of mercy in a human manner, and according to the weak lights of our reason: I see nothing more affecting to a generous heart, nor more injurious to him, than to doubt of his friendship, to hesitate upon his promises, or not to dare thro' a frivolous fear to yield to his obliging offers. Even as it is insulting a king, to doubt of his power; so it is injuring a friend, to doubt of his tenderness and his services. Diffidence in my opinion is as prejudicial to friendship as ingratitude. It is even a kind of ingratitude, when it is a hindrance from confiding in a friendship which has already been experienced several times; since we cannot doubt of the offers of services made by a friend, without having forgotten the number and merit of those services we have already received from him.

Now if diffidence and fear are so contrary to friendship, will they be less contrary to charity? If they be injurious to man, who after all is subject to inconstancy: will they be less injurious to God, who being eternal in his duration, is also eternal in his mercy?

Let us conclude to give an idea of this holy confidence which I am speaking of, and after having shewn how solid, and how necessary
it

it is, let us add here some sketches to shew it in all its advantages. Confidence is glorious to God, and an efficacious means of salvation. In it we find strength against temptations; it animates the fervour of our charity, and animates it by that spiritual joy which it infuses into us. It is that holy joy which is our most solid consolation here below. Let us say something upon each of these advantages.

SECTION XVI.

Some new characters of confidence in the mercy of God. Five advantages which are found in it.

FIRST, this confidence is glorious to God. This is what the royal prophet teaches us. That prince who had so much reason to fear, after the enormous crimes he had committed; who felt all the shame of his wanderings, and all the enormity of the ingratitude he had been guilty of against God; and who saw the justice of God armed against him, thought he could not do better to soften his wrath, than by glorifying him with all his power whom he had blasphemed by his works. But what homage, what praise, and what glory, could he give him, that were capable of repairing the crimes he had committed? The most excellent, and the most perfect,

fect, according to him, is to hope in his goodness. *I will hope in thee, O Lord,* says he to him, *yes I will hope in thee, and will always hope in thee; and by this homage I pay to thy mercy, I shall crown all the praises that mortals can give thee.* [Ps. lxx. 14.]

Secondly, this confidence is a powerful means towards the success of our salvation. The most criminal and most corrupt man that is earnestly desirous of forsaking his disorders by penance, will find in confidence in the mercy of God an efficacious remedy for all his miseries. Let him be afflicted, and let him hope, he shall be saved; God has said it, and has promised it. For this reason it is that hope is compared to the anchor of a Ship; and this comparison is consecrated by the use which the apostle St. Paul has made of it in his Epistles. [Heb. vi. 18. 19.] If a ship has lost all its riggings in a tempest, and has still an anchor left, it may serve to preserve it from the misfortune with which it is threatened. Even so it is with confidence in the mercy of God: and it may be said, that it was for want of having recourse to confidence, that Cain and Judas perished in their crimes. The first had provoked God by his jealousy and homicide; but what sealed his reprobation, was his saying in despair, *my crime is too great to hope for the pardon of it.* [Gen. iv.] The second repented of the shameful treason he had committed against Jesus Christ. Alas!

says

says St. Chrysostom, if he had taken confidence in the goodness of his divine master, if he had returned to him to beg his mercy, the son of God who pardoned St. Peter his infidelity, and prayed for his executioners, would undoubtedly have received that traitor to penance,

Thirdly, this confidence is a defence, and a powerful arm, against temptations. This is what the Scripture says of it in express terms. *In hope you shall find your strength.* [Isai. xxx.] And in another place; *I will hope in the Lord, and nothing shall be able to weaken me.* [Ps. xxv.] Indeed, what is stronger than he that confides in God? To confide in God, a person is to repose in him, to rely upon him, and to take his goodness, his truth, and his power, to his help. With such arms, what can be fear'd from an enemy that is not able to prevail against God? *The heart of the just man, says the royal prophet, is disposed to hope in the Lord continually; this it is that confirms him, nothing shall be able to move him.* [Ps. xiv.]

Fourthly, it is in this confidence that the fervour of charity is to be found. We have already said so, when we shewed, how contrary fear and diffidence are to this virtue; and when we demonstrated the difference there is between a diffident and timid love, and that which is such as the Scripture requires, *which banishes fear.* [1. John iv. 18.]

Hence

Hence it is that the wise man compares him who is animated with this virtue, to an *Eagle that flies swiftly, and cleaves the air without any hindrance.* [Isai. xl.] If a new testimony upon this matter is required, I find it in the apostle, who ordains the first faithful to *serve God fervently*, and gives them at the same time *the joy of hope*, as the most efficacious means of attaining to that fervour which he prescribes. [Rom. xii.]

Indeed it is in that spiritual joy which confidence infuses into the heart of the just, that the spirit of charity partly consists; and this is the fifth character of that virtue which I am speaking of; a character which is also very often described in the holy Scriptures. *O Lord, says the prophet again, thou hast filled me with joy, my heart was inebriated with it.* How did God work this prodigy? *Because thou hast confirmed me in hope in a most singular manner.* [Ps. iv.] Indeed, ought we not to be joyful and content, when we are assured that the most important affair we can have upon earth, is in the hands of God, who desires the success of it, as much and more than we do; who thinks on it, who labours in it, and who will forget nothing to procure it a happy event? If my salvation depended only upon myself alone, I should be overwhelmed with grief and fear; because I know my misery, my passions, and my inconstancies. But because it depends chiefly upon God, who not
only

only labours with me, but prevents me, urges me, and desires that I would correspond to his motions; I am at peace, I am content, I am rejoiced, and suffer myself to be gently conducted by his providence, being fully assured that it labours continually in my happiness. *Behold this is our God, we have expected him, and he will save us; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* [Isai. xxv. 9.]

SECTION XVII.

The sixth advantage of this holy confidence. It affords us an infinite consolation in all our troubles.

THIS holy joy produces in us a solid consolation, in the trial of all the events of life; a sixth character of that confidence I am speaking of, and which is no less precious than the others. For how can we live in this world, wherein all that surrounds us is a continual subject of affliction for us; how, I say, can we live in it without consolation? And yet where shall we find this consolation which is so necessary? It shall neither be in mortal men that surround us, nor in riches, nor pleasures; all those are too limited, too weak, and too inconstant, to procure us solid pleasures. If we find any consolations in them, they are but transitory, and

and such as only amuse the heart, but do not fill it. Even how many afflicting occasions are there, wherein neither riches, pleasures, nor friends, can afford any relief? This is reserved to confidence in God, and to his love, for what a solid consolation is it, to be loved of God; to be the object of his careffes and of his complacencies? What a consolation is it, to know, that he is preparing a crown for us, to which all that is most delightful and greatest on earth will not be equal? What a consolation is it, to think, to know, and to be assured, that he conducts us to this crown thro' all the events of life; and that those very events which seem to be the most grievous and afflicting, are the most efficacious means which he employs to succeed therein? What a consolation is it, in the midst of the most severe temptations, to know, that if God allows the devil the liberty to assault us, he only gives him power with measure, and in proportion to our strength; and even when that seems to fail us, *that faithful God, who as St. Paul says, does not permit the temptations to exceed our strength, and gives us means in the temptation itself to depart from it, that we may overcome the temptor.* [1. Cor. x.]

What a consolation is it, at the remembrance of all our past iniquities, which is so capable of making us despair; at the sight of our daily infidelities, which is so proper to discourage

courage us; what a consolation is it, I say, to think that all this has not yet wearied the patience of our God; that his infinite mercy is greater than all our iniquities; and that in the very moment that we love him with all our heart, and confide in his goodness, that infinite goodness receives us with tenderness, and vouchsafes to efface for ever what might have excited his wrath, and the excess of our fear?

What a consolation is it, even when we are in the greatest trials, when all is darkness and obscurity, and when we scarce see any thing in ourselves but crimes, and in God but wrath; when we even dare not answer for ourselves that we love God, and that it almost seems we have ceased to hope or believe, so great and so violent are the temptations; what a consolation is it, I say, to think at the same time, that this God who is so merciful and so good, before whom the desire of serving him is a service, and the desire of loving him is a love, is pleased to comprehend our very desires in the number of our meritorious actions, and to crown them in the same manner as he crowns our victories? O ye timid and terrified souls, open your hearts to this consolation! *Ye that fear the Lord, expect his mercy, and decline not from him, lest ye meet with some fall. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in him, and your recompence will*

will be secure. Once again, ye that fear, change your fear into hope, and mercy shall be your consolation. [Eccles. 11.]

Such is the consolation that may be found in all the most afflicting states of life. This consolation is real, it is solid, it neither depends on events, nor on creatures. Neither the perfidy of friends, the misfortunes of life, nor the loss of goods, can take it away. On the contrary it augments in proportion as our evils encrease; since the most sensible assurance we can have of being helped by God, is to be abandoned of every human and terrestrial help. Now where is this consolation to be found? In confidence in God alone; it is that which discovers all these comfortable truths to us, which I have just related; it is that which makes us feel all the sweetness of consolation. Without confidence, alas! how should we be able to defend ourselves from discouragement and despair?

All this may suffice to discover to us the advantages and characters of confidence in God, its sweetness, its joy, and its consolation; its necessity also, and the solid foundations upon which it is supported. There wants nothing more to render this instruction complete, than to follow timorous souls thro' the motives of their fear; to undeceive them in what occasions their diffidence; and to
solve

solve all the difficulties they bring to the sentiments of confidence, which we endeavour to inspire them with, This we shall undertake to do in the second part of this work.

The end of the first Part.

A Treatise of Confidence in the
mercy of God.

THE SECOND PART.

Wherein the objections are answered, which
fear suggests to timorous Souls.

SECTION I.

*The objections of those souls that are too fearful
and scrupulous.*

*The first objection: the rigorous justice of God.
A portrait of the severity of his judgments.*

TIMID souls find the first source of their
fear in all that faith teaches us concern-
ing the severity of the judgments of God, and
the rigour of his justice. And indeed, I ac-
knowledge, there is something to be terrified
with; and to view the portrait which the holy
Scriptures draw of them for us, it is impos-
sible but that it should sometimes cast a terror
into the most holy, or the most presumptuous
souls. Sometimes it is a holy God, that is
provoked

provoked at the smallest defilements. Sometimes it is a jealous God, that is offended with the least division. Sometimes it is an avenging God, that makes a whole land bear the punishment of the crime of some of its inhabitants, and in his fury visits it even to the fourth generation, to make it expiate the crime of its ancestors. What we are taught concerning his quality of a judge, and the rigour of his judgments, is no less terrible. For what exactness will he use in the discussion he is to make of our actions, in the day that he shall exercise his judgments; and not only of our actions, but of our words, of our desires, and of our slightest and most secret thoughts? Nothing of that which escapes our attention, shall escape his knowledge; the whole shall be discussed. A word that has nothing criminal, but which neither has any thing profitable in it, shall be reprehended. An injurious word that escaped in anger, shall be punished. A sensation produced by cupidity, and slipt our vigilance almost imperceptably, shall bear its punishment.

He is not only provoked with what we have committed, but even sometimes imputes to us that which we have not committed, and what we have often been ignorant of: and it is sufficient for this, that we have either procured it, or permitted it, or even sometimes have suffered it in silence. This silence is often criminal in his eyes, A new proof of the exactness

exactness of that severe judge. It is not only the sinner that he censures thus; he is no less terrible towards him that seems to be just; and if that just person be not sufficiently just, if he be only tepid in his love, if he be slothful in the duties of penance, if he does not correspond by his good works to the graces he has received, if in doing holy actions he does them not in a holy manner, and as the Scripture says, *if his works be not full before him*, that just person ought to fear his severity. [Apoc. 111.]

Such are the judgments of our God: judgments which are terrible by the discussion they will make, but which are no less terrible by the surprize they will give. For when will this terrible, avenging, and severe God come to exercise his judgments upon us? We do not know. He conceals his coming. He has said so; and he executes ~~it~~ literally: *It will be in the time and hour that we think the least of it*; [Luk. xi.] And when we think ourselves secure. *He comes like a thief*, [1 Thes. 111] who hides his approaches, and seeks only to surprize. He surprizes the sinner indeed, and often without giving him the leisure of doing penance. He surprizes him in the midst of his affairs, in the midst of his pleasures, and even in the midst of his crimes. He takes him away to make him give an account of them; and what still appears the more terrifying is, that without staying till that

that last moment, he exercises his judgments in this life upon those that resist this voice. He stretches out his hand over them to afflict them, or else he withdraws it to let them fall into obduracy ; he deprives them of the helps which they render unprofitable ; and sometimes there comes a time when those sinners call upon him in vain, when they seek him, when they invoke him, and this provoked God does not hear them ; because he has retired from them, and hidden himself, to shew himself no more to them, but in the terrible moment of an impenitent death, when he will insult the despair of those criminal souls. That it may not be thought I exceed in the portrait of the judgments of God, let it be observed that all these truths, and the most part of my words, are the very words of the Scripture.

After this, who will not acknowledge that God is a terrible God in his vengeance, and that nothing is more terrifying than his judgments ? Who will not cry out with the prophet, who was sometimes terrified at them so far as to faint and swoon : *How terrible are thy judgments, O my God ! forget, O Lord, my faults, and the wanderings of my youth. For if thou takest an exact account of our iniquities, alas, who can bear the severity of thy justice.* [Pf. xxiv, and cxxix.]

This is what the just and fearful soul is terrified with ; this is what he earnestly con-

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siders, and what throws him into trouble. But let us see if there be no remedy for that impression of terror made in his soul by those truths.

SECTION II.

An answer to the first objection. How terrible soever our God be, he is still more amiable towards us. What an advantage it is to us to have Jesus Christ for our judge.

IT is true that God is the judge, that he is our judge, that in quality of a judge he is severe ; but is he a judge that is not to be appeased, that is not to be gained, that does not pardon ? He surprises, he examines, and he punishes ; but at the same time, I see that he gives notice, that he menaces, that he waits, that he receives, that he pardons, that he loves, that he compassionates, that he is appeased, and that it is as easy to incline him during the course of our life, as it is impossible to appease him in the judgment which follows our death. I see that if he take the quality of a judge, *and of a strong and powerful judge*, he joins to it at the same time that of a *patient judge*, and one that is full of goodness. Does there need any thing more to encourage me ? [*Pf. vii.*]

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I see him under the symbol of a father of a family, that is provoked at the infidelities of his steward, and says to him in anger, *give an account of thy administration.* [Luk. xvi.] Would it not be imagined that he is going to punish him? No; that man bestows bounties even at the expence of his master, (a symbol of the alms given by a sinner of the goods which he has received from God, in order to appease him in his conversion; for this is the proper sense of the parable,) and this father of a family ceases to be provoked, when he has so many reasons to be so; he is appeased, he praises, and applauds the dexterity and ability of his steward, whom he had but too much reason to complain of. [Luk. xvi. 8.] I see him under the figure of a powerful king, to whom a miserable person is indebted many millions. That prince cites him to appear before him, he interrogates him, and reproaches him for his negligence. the debtor humbles himself, begs for time, and that merciful king not only grants him time, but *remits him the whole sum that was due to him.* [Matt. xviii.] I see him under the figure of another father of a family going out to seek workmen, to employ them in his vineyard. He found some persons that were idle and spending the day without doing any thing; he reproached them for it, as it seems, with indignation. Those people are touched with his remonstrance, and *labour an hour.* [Matt.

xx.] Alas, what great matter can they do in an hour? There was nothing estimable in their labour, but their good will: it was that good will which the father of the family recompensed with the same liberality, as if they had laboured all the day.

I see him in the prophet, who complains of the wanderings of his people, and reproaches them for the same. It is a God and a judge that speaks; but this is neither the language of a judge, nor that of a God. When he speaks as God, he thunders, he darts his lightening, and he punishes: *he made his voice be heard*, says the Scripture, *and the whole earth was moved with fear*. [Pf. xlvii.] A judge does not complain, he pronounces severe and irrevocable sentences, he condemns, and punishes. It is love that complains. A father, a friend, or a brother, complains, if one does not correspond to his ardent wishes; and whilst he complains, he shews that he still has friendship. Thus it is that God complains when he might punish. It is love that forms his complaints, and one cannot but know it. He complains, and to whom? To the very man whom he complains of, and this in order to touch and soften him. But yet he does it without asperity and bitterness. When a person complains to his friend, and does it mildly, it is a sign he is ready to receive his excuses, and that he will pardon him without any difficulty. O how favourable is a judge
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when he loves in this manner, and still the more favourable when he desires to be loved!

Such is our God. Can we after this carry our fear so far as to trouble and dejection? It belongs to the hardened, to the presumptuous, and to the impenitent, to shudder at the remembrance of his wrath. But as to those that are willing to serve him, if they are to fear him, it seems to me, they ought to love him still more.

Observe also, that if he be our judge, we must also acknowledge that he is our father, our spouse, our friend, our brother, our advocate, and our Saviour. How many comfortable qualities are here, against a single one that is terrible! Is not that which is terrifying in this quality ballanced by all that is amiable in the other qualities? Seeing so many different forms which his mercy assumes, for a single one under which his justice shews itself to us, have we not reason to recover our frights, and to confess with the prophet, *that the mercies of our God prevail a thousand times with relation to us, over all the other works of his power?* [Ps. cxliv.]

Let us add here the fine thought of St. John Chrysostom, in explaining this prayer of the royal prophet, who begged of God, *that his judgments and his justice might be exercised by his son.* [Ps. lxxi.] Why does the royal pro-

phet, says that father, beg that God may divest himself of his power, to vest his son made man with it? Why has God, graciously hearing the prayer of the royal prophet, effectually committed to Jesus Christ *the care of judging the living and the dead*, as he himself assures us in the gospel he has? [*John v.*] Was it because judgment in the hands of God would not have been exercised with so much justice? Yes, undoubtedly it would. The judgement would have been as equitable; but it would have been more terrible. Let a holy God judge sinful men, let an impassible God judge men given up to so many passions; let a powerful and provoked God judge weak and guilty men, alas! they could expect nothing but chastisements. But let them be judged by a man like themselves, that has experienced their miseries, and carried their sins, that is become in one and the same nature, their brother, their friend, and their saviour; instead of their having every thing to fear and little to hope for, they have on the contrary a thousand times more to hope for, it seems, than they have to fear. The judge that they have obtained is greatly disposed to be favourable to them.

Therefore it is for this reason, according to St. *John Chrysostom*; that the royal prophet desired that the judgment might be remitted into the hands of the king's son. [*Pf. lxxi.*]

lxxi.] It was for our consolation that God, thro' an effect of his mercy, has been pleased to divest himself, as one may say, of that quality of a judge, in order to vest his son with it. But this is not yet all that ought to encourage us. I say moreover: that in Jesus Christ, this very quality of a judge, which after all might seem terrible, is the most proper to calm us in our diffidences; it is one of the most comfortable titles that can be observed in the son of God.

S E C T I O N III.

A continuation of the same subject, Jesus Christ is the most favourable of all judges: first, because he is full of goodness.

IN the obligation we lie under of undergoing a judgement, could we find a judge in the world, upon whom we might build more hope, than upon the son of God? For my part, I see no judge either in heaven or upon earth, that could be better disposed to favour us. Truly, if God had given me the liberty of chusing a judge for myself, who might decide concerning my eternity, it should neither be my father, my brother, nor my friend; it should be Jesus Christ himself, whom I would desire to take upon him the judgment of me. For what favourable

dispositions could I find in another, that I do not find in my saviour and a thousand times more?

I would first desire in my judge, that he should be full of an unparalleled goodness; Secondly, that he should know in a perfect manner every thing I could make use of by way of excuse; that he should know it, if it were possible, of himself, and by his own experience. I would also desire that he should love me truly; that he should even be my friend, my intimate friend, my particular friend. I would desire that this friend, besides the allurements of friendship, should have a personal interest in judging me favourably, and in saving me. This is the judge that I would desire, and that every other undoubtedly would desire as well as me. Let them seek for all these qualities in men, they will not find them all in any other but Jesus Christ alone. I see them in him to a degree which surpasses a thousand times all that can be expected in men.

As to goodness, can we find any thing comparable to that of Jesus Christ? Call to mind what we have said of that incomprehensible goodness of his. Who is there upon earth that shall have as much goodness as he, in whom it is as infinite as his power, as his eternity, and as all his other perfections? Call to mind also what we have said of his tenderness towards us. He is afflicted, he groans, he

he weeps over us ; he is more concerned at our miseries, than we are ourselves. If it be necessary to bring any new proofs of this, you need but consider the different states under which he presents himself to us in the Scripture, to shew his love to us, and to gain our love. He became a child, to give us an easy access to him ; he was made man, to partake of our miseries with us, he made himself a slave, to set us at liberty ; he was poor, to enrich us ; and became a victim, to purify us. He takes the quality of a father, that we may be his children ; that of a master, to make us hear his voice ; that of a spouse, to excite our tenderness ; that of a mediator and security, to give us our freedom ; and that of a king, to bring us under subjection. He is the way, which leads us thro' secure places ; the truth, which instructs us by solid maxims ; and the life, which animates us, in order to make us happy and immortal. If we be sinners, *he is our justice* ; [1 Cor. i.] if we be in darkness, he is our light ; if we be afflicted, *he is our patience* ; [Ps. lxx.] if we be weak, he is our strength ; if we fear death, he is the resurrection ; and if we will be happy, he himself is our felicity.

Do you still want other proofs of this goodness ? Behold his anxiety to bring us back from our wanderings. Represent him to yourselves such as the Scripture describes him ; sometimes *standing at the door of our*
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heart, [*Apoc.* iii.] to observe the proper moment to make the entrance of it be opened to him; sometimes fatigued with the long delays of our ingratitude, and sitting down with grief to expect us; sometimes lifting up his plaintive and mournful voice, to soften our obduracy. [*John* iv. *Cant.* v.] Represent to yourselves this charitable shepherd, who exhausts himself with seeking his strayed sheep. Alas! according to justice, it should be the duty of the sheep itself to come to seek the shepherd; but his goodness does not permit him to wait for his sheep; he pursues it, he seeks it, and when he has found it, instead of being angry with it, and striking it, he flatters it, and *lays it upon his shoulders*, not to hinder it from running away, but to relieve it. [*Luk.* xv.] He knows that it has fatigued itself with its wandering, he is afraid it should be fatigued in its return, and he forgets that he has fatigued himself with seeking it. This is the image, and a faint image of the goodness of Jesus Christ towards us. Can we doubt of his being good, of his being very good, of his being infinitely good, of his being good even to excess, if there could be any in his goodness. Shall we find a judge upon earth that has so much goodness.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is a compassionate judge.

A Part of his goodness consists in compassionating our weaknesses: another quality that you may desire your judge should have, and which we shall find in Jesus Christ. In the judge he even compassionates as God, because in that quality, *he created us; as a father has mercy on his children, even so the Lord has mercy on them that fear him; he knows the dust he formed us of, and the misery of our weak nature.* [Ps. cii.] With much more reason will he compassionate us in that quality as man, since in it he was pleased to experience our weaknesses himself, even to the temptations of the devil. *There is only sin, says the apostle St. Paul, which he has not suffered; but as to all the other miseries of our human nature, says that apostle, he has shared them with us, that he might compassionate our infirmities.* [Heb. iv.] Indeed, tho' he was God, *his soul in the midst of temptations was sorrowful even unto death.* [Matt. xxvi.] He was, as one may say, dejected at the sight of the trials thro' which he was to pass, and that sight caused his body to suffer a sweat of blood. He complained to his father in his sorrow, of being forsaken by him, and desired him to

deliver him from a chalice whose bitterness frightened him, It is true those motions of fear, of grief, and terror, were excited by his own will in the inferior part of his soul, and he felt them only because he was pleased to feel them. After all, he had the feeling of them; and this is enough to make him compassionate those in whom these sensations and passions are involuntary. This is enough to induce him not to exact of them an insensibility impossible to our nature, and to pardon those more readily who cry to him from the depth of their misery and weakness, which he by his own experience knows the whole weight of. Thus does the church beg mercy of him *by his grief, by his languor, by his agony, and by his temptations.* Indeed, it is by these miseries, with which he was pleased to vest himself in order to experience them like us, that he seems more inclined to compassionate those which are in us the source of so many sins.

SECTION V.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is at the same time our judge, and our friend.

OUR judge is full of goodness, and is as compassionate as he is good. I add in the third place, that he is even the best, the

the most intimate, and the tenderest friend we have: for this is the title which he vouchsafes to give us, and the quality he is pleased to take himself in our regard. *You are my friends*, said he to his apostles; and again, *I will call you no longer servants, but friends*. Therefore Jesus takes the quality of a friend in regard of us; a new occasion to hope for a favourable judgment from him. For in fine what friend can you rely upon? You will find there is still more reason to rely upon the friendship of Jesus Christ. Your friend loves you tenderly, he has told you so a thousand times; he is ready to serve you on every occasion, and has already given you proofs of it. This love is great, but how great soever it be, is it comparable to that of Jesus Christ? That friend after all has nothing to give you but his heart, and that heart is small, it is limited; it is the heart of a man. The heart of Jesus Christ is large, is immense, is infinite; it is the heart of a God. The friendship of your friend is weak: alas! how many occasions are there in which he cannot succour you otherwise than with his tears. The friendship of Jesus Christ is strong and powerful; nature, hell, and death, are subject to his will in all things. The love of your friend is new; it is but some years since he began to know you. The love of Jesus Christ is much more antient, it is eternal: before all times he had thoughts of mercy and salvation towards

wards you. It is seventeen ages since he prepared for you, by the very effusion of his blood, a source wherewith to enrich you for ever. Friendship in your friend is perhaps interested; it is the hope of your protection, or of your assistance; or at least it is the pleasure he finds in the agreeableness of your company, which attaches him to you. The friendship of Jesus Christ has no other interest than yours: he is rich, he is happy, he is glorious, and he is God, without you; and he loves you only for your own good, and to render you infinitely happy. The friendship of your friend is frail; an offence, a jealousy, or too smart an answer; and less still than this, a forgetfulness, a coldness, a want of regard or attention, sometimes cools the most tender connections. The friendship of Jesus Christ is constant and durable; thousands and thousands of offences have not yet repulsed him, and tho' you despised his voice long since, yet he actually, and whilst you are reading this, speaks to you, urges you, and tenderly says to you, *my son give me thy heart*, even as I have given mine to thee. [Prov. xxiii.]

Let us say moreover: has your friend, your brother, your spouse, or him that you love most tenderly on earth, ever given his life for you; Jesus has done it. Has he ever redeemed you from death? Jesus has done it. Has he ever pardoned you your treasons and ingritudes?

ingratitude? Jesus has done it. Has he ever taken you from poverty to enrich you? Jesus has done it. Has he ever fed you with his body and blood? Jesus has done it. Will he ever set you upon a throne? Jesus will do it. Will he make you eternally happy? Jesus will spare nothing to procure you that happiness. Judge you after this if the friendship of Jesus Christ be preferable. To which of these two friends would you now be willing to give your confidence? Shall it be to that earthly man, or to Jesus Christ? Which of these two friendships will be the most capable of encouraging you? Is there any one therefore that is not sensible of all the preference he ought to give to Jesus Christ? And should we not be ashamed after this to have too great a fear of his judgment, and to prefer the judgment of an earthly man, whose friendship is contemptible in comparison of that of Jesus Christ? Yes, it is he, since he permits me to call him so, that is truly my friend, and the friend of my heart. What do I say? Not only my friend, but who is also my brother, my spouse, my deliverer, and my father. By uniting all those qualities in himself, he unites all the sentiments of tenderness which all these qualities ought to inspire. By multiplying the titles of his affection, he multiplies also, as one may say, the rights I hope to have to his mercy.

SECTION VI.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ is a judge that is interested in the success of our salvation.

IN these qualities I find also a new reason to confide in the judgment of Jesus Christ; because these qualities engage him for his own interest to judge me mercifully. I have already said, that what we might ambition the most, was to find a judge interested in the sentence he should give in our favour. Jesus Christ is that favourable judge, who has all manner of interest in saving me. The interest of his glory: he finds it in gaining my heart in spite of my rebellions; he finds it in forgetting my faults in spite of my indignity: the greater sinner I am, the more he displays the magnificence of his mercy. Thus it is that he triumphs in his saints: in them he is glorified, and is glorified in the sight of all the universe, which sees that he is God in his mercy, as he is God in his justice. The interest, as one may say, of his riches: would he therefore be willing to lose all those treasures that he has already employed for me? I have cost him so much to redeem me; would he be willing to lose the price of my salvation unnecessarily and without any fruit? The interest, as one may say, of kindred and of family: since he calls
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us his brethren, his children, and his spouses. Does not a father interest himself in the salvation of his son? A spouse in that of his bride; and a brother in that of his brother? It is by these titles that Jesus loves us; it is also by these titles that he will interest himself in saving us. Such, in my opinion, is the thought of the author of *Ecclesiasticus*, when he says, that *man includes his tenderness within his relations*, and limits himself more particularly to the love of his family; but that God, who reckons all men in his family, because they are all his children, *has as much mercy and love for all men*, as we have for those that are bound to us by the ties of blood. [*Eccles.* xviii. 12.]

Let us say moreover, it is because he interests himself in our salvation, even more than we do ourselves. If a pagan said formerly, that man was more dear to the Gods, than to himself; [*Juven.*] we may say, with much more reason, that we are still dearer to Jesus Christ. The proof I have for it, is that he does more for our salvation, than we do ourselves to make it succeed. What has he not done, and what does he not yet do? And as to us, alas! what is it that we do? I would even willingly say, that he seems to be interested in it still more for himself, than for us. This is what I find in the evangelical parables, of a woman that sought a jewel she had lost, and of a shepherd that run after a strayed

strayed sheep. After many labours and cares, the one and the other found again what they sought, and immediately assembled their friends, to tell them the news of it, as persons relate with pleasure the happy success of an affair in which they are interested. They assemble them that they might receive their congratulations as it were for a great advantage. The shepherd does not say, congratulate my sheep for its happy return, because it has escaped the teeth of the wild beasts; no, it is himself that will be congratulated. *Rejoice with me*, says he, because I am in the height of joy: I am transported with joy, and seek some friends that may share in it with me. All the pains and labour I have undergone are nothing to me; *my sheep that was lost is found again*, and I am very happy. [*Luk. xv.*] Should it not be said, that the happiness or riches of that shepherd depended on this sheep of his, and that without it he would be neither rich nor happy? Thus it is, O my saviour! that thou seekest us, and dost interest thyself in our salvation; woe to him that is not affected with these anxieties: even woe to him that does not find in this goodness enough to recover him from his diffidences.

But what then, these timid souls will say here, Jesus Christ is a friend, he is a father, he is compassionate, and he has an interest in saving

saving us; but after all he is just: can he avoid being provoked against me who am a sinner? Can he dispense himself from pronouncing dreadful sentences against me, who deserve nothing but chastisements? It will be to no purpose to describe the instances of his mercy; it will always be requisite to acknowledge the rights of his justice. Yes, it is true, we must always acknowledge them; but I add, that this does not justify the excess of fear, in those over whom it predominates. To complete their convincement, I maintain that it is this very justice wherewith they are terrified, which ought to be their hope. Yes, we have more to hope from God, because he is just, than we should have to hope, if he were not so. This is what we must explain in the following section.

SECTION VII.

Fifthly, tho' God be a most just judge, yet it is precisely because he is just, that we ought to have the greater hope in him.

TO understand what I have just said, we must remember that the penitent sinner requires a share in the mercy of his God, only by virtue of an incontestable right which he has to obtain it. What then is this right? It is the right of Jesus Christ, it is the right which

which the merits of Jesus Christ give to him.

If the sinner beg for mercy in his own name, if he beg it by virtue of his own tears, and if he beg it by the merit of his good works, he would be despised and unworthy to be heard. But what is the price he offers? It is the very satisfactions of the son of God, his cross, his sufferings, his blood, his tears, and his wounds; a price worthy of the mercy of God, and of those graces which may be expected from him, how infinite soever they may be, and how unworthy soever we be of them. The prophet astonished at the justice of God, said heretofore; *if thou take an account of our iniquities, who shall be able to bear thy wrath?* But he immediately added to encourage himself, *in God there is mercy.* And why? *Because there is also in him an abundant redemption; and he redeems Israel from all his sins,* how great and how numerous soever they may be. [Ps. cxxix.] It is therefore with this abundant redemption that we fulfil all the rights of the justice of God. We find this treasure in Jesus Christ, in him we possess it, and by him we present it to his father; and with such a price we have a right to expect all from his mercy. This thought is my consolation, when being at the altar, I have the honour to hold in my hands the precious body of my saviour, and his inestimable blood. Then I think I have a right to say:
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My father and my God, if thou art provoked against me, see what I have here to satisfy thee with! this treasure I hold is mine, because Jesus Christ has given it to me. This treasure is infinite, and as infinite as thy graces and thy mercy. Set the salvation I beg, set thy paradise, and set thy benefits, at as high a price as thou shalt please, here is enough to satisfy thee with, and to content thy justice.

The sinner therefore does not say, look upon me, O Lord! on the contrary, being confounded with the misery he sees himself in, he would willingly say, as St. Peter did in his fear, *depart from me O Lord, for I am defiled.* [Luk. v.] He bows his eyes to the ground like the publican, because he dares not lift them up towards heaven, for fear, it seems, of drawing upon him the looks of God; or like Magdalen, who watered the feet of Jesus with her tears, as she stood behind him. But if the sinner dares not shew himself, he says to God, *Lord look upon thy son!* [Pl. xxxiii.] Look upon his wounds and his blood, and thou wilt be appeased. What do I say, is this the sinner that speaks? No, it is the son of God himself, who solicits his father for the sinner, and vesting himself, as one may say, with the person of the sinner, says in his name, and for him, *father I have sinned.* [Luk. xv.] And at the same time he offers to that provoked father the infinite treasures of his

his merits, to fulfil all the rights of his justice, and thereby that justice itself becomes favourable to us.

In this sense it is that Jesus Christ is not only *our mediator*; but he is also, says St. John, *our advocate with God*. [1 John xi.] There is indeed some difference between these two qualities. The mediator begs mercy, he begs it even when we do not deserve it, he begs it, seemingly, with a sort of fear; but the advocate begs justice, he begs it steadily, and begs it with authority and assurance. If the tribunal before which he speaks be a just and perspicacious tribunal, he begs it by virtue of the pieces he produces. So far from being terrified at the justice of the tribunal where he speaks, it is in the very justice of this tribunal that he establishes his confidence. Thus it is that Jesus Christ speaks for us; and thus it is that he speaks with authority and assurance. He speaks with the titles in his hand, and his titles are as incontestible as his wounds are evident. He has even kept the scars of them in heaven, to shew them incessantly to his father, as the price of his mercies. What have we to fear after this at the tribunal of God, when such an advocate takes upon him there our defence? How severe soever that tribunal be, after all it is just; and since it is just, what can it refuse Jesus Christ? Even the more just that tribunal be, the more reason

son there is to expect a favourable decision from it.

SECTION VIII.

A continuation of the same thought. Another reason which proves that the very justice of God ought to fortify our confidence.

LET us here add a second argument: nothing is more proper to calm the fears of a faithful person, than to shew him that the very justice of God is interested in his salvation. I draw this argument from the promises which God has made to us. I presume to say it, I believe he is obliged as it were in justice, to give us what he has promised us only out of mercy. Indeed, is there any thing more just than to keep his word, and to be faithful in his promises? Now he has promised a thousand times to pardon us, when we should return to him with a contrite and humbled heart. It is true that it is thro' his great mercy that he has thus engaged himself to receive us; but since he has vouchsafed to engage his word in it; that God, whom St. Paul calls a faithful God in his promises, will, thro' the fidelity of his justice, execute what he has promised us in the tenderness of his mercy. [1 Cor. x.] Observe even what extent he gives to this promise: *if the impious man,*

man, says he, does penance for all his sins, he shall live and shall not die ; and I will forget them all. And again ; in what day soever the impious man is converted, in the same day shall his impiety be pardoned him, and it shall not hurt him. [Ezech. xviii, 21. 22. and xxxiii. 12.]

He not only directs his word to the weak, or to sinners drawn away by human frailty ; but even to the impious ; and this word comprehends every thing that is most odious : the sacrilegious, the atheists, the profaners, the blasphemers, and the idolators ; all these shall receive mercy if they beg for it. He does not say, if they seek it a long time, if they merit it, or if they purchase it by their works ; no, he sets no other conditions than sincerity and integrity of heart to beg it upon. *He shall receive mercy*, not after long solicitations ; but *in the very day* of his begging it, and of his conversion. The sun that shall see his penance, shall also see his pardon : God himself being willing to practise, as one may say, what he commands us in his gospel ; the sun shall not set upon his wrath, if the sinner does not sleep in his obduracy. Behold what is promised, behold what I beg of God, and behold what, I presume to say it, I have a right to require of him by virtue of his promises, and as I have said, in the name, and thro' the merits of Jesus Christ.

It is true, that by promising pardon to him that is converted, God has not promised the

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next day to him that delays his conversion. If the sinner defers his conversion to the next day, he puts himself in danger of losing all. This prevents the unjust consequences which the sinner would willingly draw from those merciful promises, in order to authorise himself in the delay of his conversion. It is not promised to him that God will wait for the end of those unjust delays: on the contrary, the same scripture which promises him pardon, assures him of the surprize which will deprive him of the opportunity of begging it. He who promises him mercy, menaces him also to bereave him very soon of the time and means to obtain it, if he neglect to beg it. But even as that which comforts the penitent ought not to authorise the sinner, even so that which terrifies the sinner ought not to disturb the penitent. The last ought to believe that God graciously hears his desires; since, as I have said, this is not only the nature of his mercy, but it is also the duty of his justice.

St. Paul was convinced of this, when he said, *God keeps a crown for me, but a crown of justice which he will one day bestow on me, he who is just in his judgments: and not only for me, but also for all those that desire his coming.* [2 Tim. iv.] Words which might seem bold, but which are true in their whole latitude; chiefly according to the sense we are taught to give them by what I have just said. It was nei-

ther upon the labours of the apostleship, nor upon his own good works, that the apostle grounded this title *of justice*. We see it clearly enough in his giving the same right to all those that desire the coming of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, he knew very well that it is not in our own good works that we can put our confidence: for as St. *Augustin* says, woe to the most holy life, if God examines it without mercy. This, I say it cursorily, is what may comfort the penitent that is afflicted because he has no good works to offer, and who takes from thence an occasion of discouragement. For it is not so much your good works which God requires to pardon you, as the conversion of your heart. It is the love of your heart, it is the confidence of your heart, that he requires of you: with these you may hope for all. But let us return to the sentiment of the apostle: upon what then did he ground this title *of justice*, which he pretended to have to the crown that he expected? It was, no doubt, upon the truth of the promises of God, and upon the holiness of the merits of Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore acknowledge here, to the glory of our God, and for the consolation of those souls that are thrown into dejection by fear, that notwithstanding the severity of the eternal judgments, the faithful just man and the penitent sinner, find enough in the justice of God to nourish and excite their confidence,

dence. If the very justice of that severe tribunal is favourable to us, what will it be if we join thereto all that mercy makes us hope for there? What more solid confidence can we have, than that which is supported at the same time upon justice as well as upon mercy? Since this very justice maintains our confidence, ought we not to find our consolation in it, and say with the prophet: *Lord I have remembered thy eternal judgments, and those very judgments have wrought my consolation.* [Pl. cxviii. 52.]

SECTION IX.

The second objection of fearful souls: the greatness and multitude of their sins.

HERE is enough already to encourage those souls that are too fearful, and too greatly terrified at the first object which occasions their terrors; but this is not yet sufficient for them. It is not the justice of God alone which causes their uneasiness; it is their own sins, of which they see the number and enormity, and dare scarce hope for the pardon of them. This is a second obstacle which they bring to that confidence I require of them; an obstacle which we must remove by some new reflections.

True it is our sins are great, our ingratitude^s and infidelities are frequent, they are numerous and enormous, and of themselves deserve no mercy. It is true also that there is a great deal to frighten, not only those that crouch in the disorders of a most worldly life, but also those half devout souls, who permit themselves without scruple what they call light faults, and who daily and voluntarily multiply their infidelities to infinity. These cannot be too much alarmed at the just severities of God: for when a person is not afraid to sin, he cannot have too great a fear of the justice of him, who sooner or later punishes sin.

Neither is it for those slack and presumptuous souls that I write: I have said so a hundred times, and shall not weary myself with repeating it; I am willing here to fortify weakness, and not to nourish presumption. It is therefore to the weak and fearful souls that I address myself, to those who fear sin, are willing to forsake it, and to renounce it for ever; to those who love God truly, sincerely, and cordially, or at least are desirous to love him in this manner; and to those who thinking they do not love him sufficiently, are afflicted and complain bitterly: for all this is loving continually and loving truly. It is to these I say with Jesus Christ, *take confidence my children, your sins are remitted you.* [Matt. ix.

ix. 2.] How great, how enormous, and how numerous, soever they be, the mercy of God is still more abundant; mercy is only for the miserable, as redemption is only for captives, and as pardon is only for sinners. It is therefore the duty of sinners, of captives, and of the miserable, to hope: even the more miserable and sinful they be, the more right they have, in my opinion, to hope in the mercy of God. Let us set this thought in a clearer light, and let us teach the faithful to form to themselves a just idea of the extent of the mercy of our God.

If God hated the sinner whilst the sinner lives upon earth; if he forgot the sinner whilst he is forgotten by the sinner; if instead of expecting the sinner with patience, he prevented him in his wrath; if he rejected the sinner when he sees him return to him; if he were inexorable when that sinner humbly begs his pardon; alas! we should then have reason to give ourselves up to fear; and despair itself would even seem reasonable. But it is not by such instances as these that I discern my God and my Saviour. On the contrary, I see that he loves the sinner; that so far from forgetting him, he is continually recalling him from his wanderings; that instead of rejecting him for his delays, he expects him with patience; and that he readily pardons him, and receives him with tenderness, when he sees him return. This

is the portrait which the Scripture makes us of the heart and of the bounties of our God. Let us view in particular all the strokes of this picture.

SECTION X.

An answer to the former objection. The sentiments of God towards the sinner, are sentiments of mercy. He loves him, and even melts, as one may say, into tenderness over him, in as much as he is a sinner.

GOD hates sin, I grant it; but notwithstanding he loves the sinner: he loves him tenderly; and it seems even sufficient that he be a sinner, to have a share in that tenderness of his love. Alas? why should he not love him? Tho' a sinner as he is, yet he is his creature; he is the work of his hand, and what is more, he is his child. This is represented to us by the tenderness of that holy king, who driven from his throne by an unnatural son, still preserved all paternal tenderness for that son, whilst he was obliged, for the security of his own life, to arm himself against him, and to pursue him as a rebel.

The crime of *Abfalom* could not have been more enormous, and yet the love of *David* could not be more tender. He is obliged to march at the head of an army against that unnatural

natural son, and to give him a decisive battle. But his greatest care before the engagement, was to recommend to his officers, and to his troops, *to save him his son.* [2 Kings xviii.] It was that ambitious, cruel, and ungrateful son; that perfidious, criminal, and unnatural son; it was that very son whom *David* still loved, and whom he desired to save; tho' he could not do it but at the expence perhaps of his crown, and with the risk of his life. Yet, as it is known, that son perished in the fight, and *David* triumphed over the rebels; but that prince was insensible of his victory, and was only concerned at the death of his son. He forgot that this death freed him from the most unworthy son in the world, restored him to his kingdom, and put his life in security. He forgot, I say, all these advantages, to employ his thoughts only in that loss which interested his heart. He shed torrents of tears; he covered his face that he might no longer behold the light; he melted his whole court into tenderness with his cries; he threw consternation amongst all his troops; and would have sacrificed his kingdom and his life itself, to have saved the life of that unhappy man. *O my son, my dear son, my son Absalom: alas who will take away my life to restore it to thee, and would to God I had died for thee!* [2 Kings xix.]

Such are the sentiments of tenderness which God our father has for us, even when sin

makes us rebel against him. It indeed is the sinner that is represented by the ungrateful *Absalom*; and whatever is odious in the crime of that prince, is found in the rebellion of the man that violates the law of his God. But if that sinner be as criminal as *Absalom* was, yet God has no less tenderness than *David* had. For what attention is there in *that amiable God, the father and ruler of our life*! [Eccles. xxiii.] What attention is there, I say, to the preservation of the sinner, whose chastisement and death is demanded by the whole universe? It seems to me that I hear him cry out to all the enemies of our life and salvation, *save me my son Absalom*, preserve him, and spare him. Alas! on such an occasion, I had like to have perished by a sickness, or by a dreadful accident; I was then in sin, and if I had died, I had been lost for an eternity. But, my God, and my father! thou wast concerned for my life, thou wast concerned for my salvation; and in the anxieties of thy tenderness, thou ordainedst thy creatures to succour me. Thou didst send thy angels to protect me, and thou saidst, *it is my son, it is my son Absalom, save him, save him that I love*. [2 Kings xviii.]

Thus it is that God loves the sinner; I even add that it may be said in one sense, that he has an interest in loving the sinner thus. I desire the reader to observe, how profitable sinners are to his glory, how unworthy soever they be. Indeed, without the excess of their impiety.

impiety, should we know the magnificence of the mercy of our God; and would that mercy be manifested to our eyes in its whole extent? No certainly: for what gave occasion to God to shew his goodness, was the malice of men. Thus, according to the prophet, it is in the pardon God grants to them, that he finds his own glory. *God, says he, expects the sinner to pardon him; and in that pardon which he shall grant, he shall be glorified.* [Isai. xxx.] And the same prophet adds in another place, that if he pardons, it is not only for the advantage of the sinner that he does it, but also for himself, and for his own glory: *I am he that blots out thy iniquities for my own sake.* [Isai. xliii.] According to this thought we may explain these words of St. Paul, which seem to have some obscurity: *all have sinned, says he, and stand in need of the glory of God.* [Rom. iii.] What glory does this apostle speak of, but of that which a merciful God finds in granting pardon? It is a glory to a king to punish, but it is also a glory to him to remit the punishment. If it be glorious to him to subdue, and to humble the rebellious; it would be unworthy of his Majesty and courage, to use rigour towards those that have recourse to his clemency. Such, in my opinion, is the greatness of our God. All have sinned, all have rebelled, and all have deserved to be the victims of his justice: how can they avoid it; since it would be to his

glory to humble and punish them? It is necessary that this God should also find his glory in pardoning them. It is this glory of the mercy of God which becomes for them a principle of salvation, and a subject of hope. In this sense *sinners stand in need of the glory of God, to receive the pardon of their crimes.*

It is easy to conclude from all this, that tho' we be sinners, yet we ought not to believe, that God has nothing but sentiments of vengeance and hatred for us. It is the miserable and sinners that are the objects of his mercy; the property of this attribute is to pardon. Now, who are they that mercy shall pardon? Shall it be the innocent? Or rather shall it not be the guilty, who being humbled after their crimes, bring no other merit to its tribunal, than the humble confession of their misery, and a sincere desire to abandon it? Over those it more gloriously exercises its power. *I have felt*, said the apostle St. Paul, speaking of his conversion, *I have felt the effects of a mercy I did not deserve; because it was pleased to shew all its extent in me, to be an example to those that are to believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* All sinners as well as he would feel the effects of the mercy of God, if they brought no obstacle thereto by their diffidence or presumption. [1 Tim 1. 16.]

Therefore once again, to be a sinner is no obstacle to receive the mercy of God; but on the contrary, it seems to be a motive which
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may help still the more to hope for it. A prince founded a magnificent hospital; all the poor without exception are received into it, and great care is taken of them: do the sick, the maimed, and those that are covered with ulcers and rags, despair of being admitted into that hospital because of their misery? On the contrary, do they not depend on their misery and their rags, on their ulcers and infirmities, to be received there? Do they not think that the door of a house destined to receive all the miserable, will not be shut against the most miserable of all men? Thus it is that the number and enormity of my sins do not discourage me, even as those poor persons would not be discouraged by their misery. How great soever those sins be, they are so far from excluding me from the mercy of God, that on the contrary they leave me all the right I have to pretend to that mercy, and to invoke it. And because they are enormous and innumerable, I say the more willingly, O my God, save me, and deliver me. If I am the greatest of all sinners, in this, O Lord, thou wilt shew more gloriously the whole extent of thy mercy, and the power of thy redemption.

SECTION XI.

God calls the sinner, and the very menaces he uses in calling him, are fitter to excite our confidence, than to discourage our weakness.

GOD loves the sinner, altho' he be a sinner. If we still doubt of it, let us think with what goodness he calls him in his wanderings, to bring him back again to him. We have already exposed it at length, and shall not repeat it here. Observe only that those whom he is come to seek, are sinners; those for whom he died, are sinners; those whom he calls, are sinners; those whom he urges the most earnestly, are the greatest sinners; and those whom he calls the most strongly, if I may presume to make use of this metaphor, after whom he cries the most loudly, are those that are the most distant from him. To have sinned, to have sinned grievously, and to have committed enormous sins, is not therefore a reason to believe that he will reject him that is willing to leave off sinning. Was it ever imagined that what is the matter of mercy, should be an obstacle to it, and make it grow cold upon us?

It is true that our God, weary with calling those sinners mildly, who are insensible to his caresses, threatens and reproaches them: the whole Scripture is full of this. But ought that

to hinder us from going with confidence to him? No certainly: on the contrary, it manifests so much the better to me, the repugnancy he has to punish us. For in fine, to use complaints, reproaches, and menaces, is not the language of a provoked God, that does not pardon. Real anger does not speak in this manner, by the mouth of him that has the means in his hands to avenge himself; but vengeance proceeds from dissimulation and silence, like the lightening that darts from a gloomy cloud. To menace, is to advertise, to delay, to give time to avoid the punishment. Are not these so many effects of mercy?

This is described to us in a sensible manner in the history of the conversion of the *Ninivites*. Who would not but have thought that the wrath of God had resolved their ruin, when they saw a prophet sent on purpose from him, to signify to them the sentence passed for the destruction of their city? In how long a time was this sentence to be put in execution? Not within an age, or a year; but in the short delay of forty days. The prophet does not say, do penance to avoid destruction: perhaps you will obtain mercy; or else your city will be entirely ruined, unless you do penance. No, he does not speak in this manner; the sentence appears absolute, and seems to be irrevocable; *in forty days*

days Nineve shall be destroyed. Even the people of the city thought so ; and if they did penance, it was but in doubting of the success this penance might have, in softening the wrath of God: *perhaps, say they, God will be converted, and will pardon us.* This *perhaps*, this doubt, this uncertainty, was sufficient, 'tis true, to bring them to penance ; but after all it was only a doubt, and they durst not positively assure themselves of pardon. [*Jon. iii.*]

The prophet himself did not believe they were to obtain it: for he expected to see the accomplishment of his prophecy; and after his preaching not daring to stay in the city, for fear of being buried with the guilty under its ruins, he retired without its precincts under a tree, to be a witness of the vengeance of God. How comes it then, O prophet, that thou shouldst be ignorant of the mercies of God, who threatens only out of goodness? Is it because if he had resolved to destroy that city without remission, he would have sent thee to acquaint the inhabitants with it? Would he have waited still forty days to execute his designs? And would he have been pleased to give that space of time to those who should have had nothing to expect from him? This is the lesson which God himself was pleased to give *Jonas*, and taking occasion from the grief which that prophet had conceived

ceived at the death of a shrub; which gave him shelter, he said to him: *dost thou think it well to be angry for the ivy? And he said, I am very angry even unto death. And the Lord said, thou art sorry for the ivy, in which thou didst not labour, nor hast made it grow; which sprung up in one night's time, and in one night it has perished; and shall I not spare Ninive the great city, in which there are more than twenty thousand men, that cannot discern between the right hand and the left? [Jon. iv. 9.] Those men are my work, they are mine, they are my children, it is I that gave them life; why should not I suffer myself to be touched with compassion by their humiliation? I have threatened them only to bring them back to penance; and since they do penance, what can I desire more from their obedience? Shall I therefore destroy a docible and humbled people.*

Thus it is that God is merciful even in his complaints, in his menaces, and in his reproaches; that he is merciful towards all those that are sinners; that he calls them sincerely; and that he is afraid, it seems, of being obliged to punish them. To have sinned grievously, is not therefore a reason to think that we shall not have a share in his mercy.

Here I call to mind the remembrance of an affecting example, which is related by an author of antiquity, the application of which will make that subject more sensible which I am

am speaking of. [Valerius Maximus, lib. 5. cap. 5.]

SECTION XII.

A confirmation of what we have said. An image of that tenderness with which God seeks the sinner, in a history related by an antient author.

A Man was so unhappy in children, that having but one, this unnatural son, without any cause of discontent, resolved to assassinate his father, from whom he had never received aught but good things; and even begun to seek an opportunity for it. The father having learnt his design in such a manner that he could not doubt of it, concealed one day a poniard in his bosom, and desiring his son to accompany him, he led him to a by-place at the bottom of a thick forest, where the very day light could scarce penetrate. Then seeing himself alone with that wicked son, he drew out his poniard. The son astonished at that spectacle, instantly imagined it was over with him; and his conscience reproaching him with his bad designs, he did not doubt but that his father had brought him into that secret place, to take revenge of him more securely. But this was not the intent of that good and indulgent father. My son, says he, take this poniard, and since you have

have so great a desire to send me out of this world, satisfy your fury in safety. Here is my breast, plunge this dagger into it; let not your parricide hand spare me, I will not resist it. I conducted you into this solitude, that by offering you my life, I might save yours, and preserve your honour. You have no need to employ assassins, nor to prepare poisons, you would run too great risk in doing that. My son, here is my head, take it off without any danger from him that displeases you in this world. If a blind fury has made you forget that you are my son, I shall not forget that I am your father. I will have you a second time to owe that life to me which I shall save from the hands of the executioners, by sacrificing mine to you in this solitary place. Once again, my son, my dear son, how cruel soever your desire may be, satisfy it: for as I must die very soon, either by your cruelty, or my own grief; I shall have the consolation by dying here of concealing the shame of your parricide in obscurity, and shall give you once again this mark of my tenderness, which you ought to have been more sensible of.

How hardened soever this unnatural son was, these words moved him to compassion. He threw himself immediately at the feet of his father, and oppressed on one hand with the shame of his crime, and on the other with the admirable goodness of his father, he endeavoured

deavoured in vain to answer him; but his sobs, and his tears, stifling his speech; he could scarce utter these words to him he was so interrupted by his sighs: Live my dear father, live for ever: it is my duty to die, I have too greatly deserved it: turn that poniard against me, I can no longer bear the light after being thus criminal: bury for ever in these obscure places the opprobriousness of my cruel designs: if your hand does not punish me, it is necessary that. * * * * * He could not make an end, because his repeated sobs put a stop to his voice, and the father in his turn melting in tears, threw himself about the neck of that son in transports of joy at seeing him changed into tenderness; and endeavouring to raise him up, they were both a long time without being able to speak in any other manner than by their tears.

We are not surprized that the same son was so affected with the delightful goodness of his father; but what should we have said, if insensible to all the sentiments of nature, he had seized the poniard his father offered him, and satiated his criminal fury with it? Should we find terms to express the shame of such an ingratitude, and all the indignation we should feel against that cruel parricide! Alas, let us moderate our anger; let us put a stop to the excess of our indignation; or rather let us turn it against ourselves: for we ourselves practice the same but too much every day. I truly

discover in the tenderness of that father, the compassion of Jesus Christ, who was pleased to offer us his life, in order to manifest his love to us, and to excite ours; but I do not discover in our conduct, the conversion of that unnatural son. Instead of being touched with the tenderness of so good a God, how many crimes do we daily add to those which brought him down upon earth? He offered himself to men that he might die for them, and men wrecked all their fury upon him. Not content with that barbarity, we add, as one may say, as many new deaths, as we commit fresh crimes. He still presents himself as often to us, he speaks to us, he urges us, he puts himself into our hands; and from all these merciful advances, he reaps no other fruit than contempt and insults; is not this taking the poniard out of the hand of our father, to plunge it into his breast?

Who would not but think that this father, (I should almost say too good) ought at length to be provoked at such ingratitude? However his tenderness is not yet bounded there: for being so merciful as to call the sinner in his wanderings, he is also patient enough to expect him in his delays.

SECTION XIII.

Thirdly, after God has spoken in vain, he is still pleased to wait with patience for the return of the sinner. How admirable this patience is. What consequence the sinner ought to draw from thence.

GOD indeed expects the sinner, and for that reason he is as slow to punish, as he is speedy to pardon. It is an admirable saying of *S. John Chrysostom*, that men are a long time in forming a work, and diligent in destroying it; but God in the works of his grace acts quite in another manner: for he is expeditious in forming them, and is speedy in purifying and pardoning them. An instant suffices him to create man, to sanctify *S. John*, to convert *S. Paul*, to move *Magdalen* to repentance, and to grant pardon to the thief. But is he obliged to punish? It might almost be said, that he forgets the power he has to do it: for he delays, he expects, he menaces, he takes no notice, and he almost seems to be ignorant of our crimes. If at length he be obliged to punish, he still prolongs the time of punishment; either to shew us that it is only with regret that he has done it; or to give us an occasion of finding some moment in this new delay to mitigate his anger. He intends to destroy men by

by the deluge, he will efface them from off the earth, *I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth.* [Gen. vi.] Which they had defiled by their abominations; and he is a hundred years in menacing them with it. He intends to punish *Ninive* for its crimes; and after a thousand delays he even pronounces a definitive sentence, but defers the execution of it for forty days: *at the end of forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed.* [Jon. iii.] He intends to punish the jewish people with captivity; and several ages are employed in foretelling them of it: he is solicitous all that time to make them be told of it by a hundred prophets; and according to the expression of one of them, *he arises early in the morning* to entreat them to penance. [Jer. vii.] He is like a man of great business that is afraid of a misfortune, and interrupts his sleep in order to find some remedy against it. Such is the patience of God, in waiting for the conversion of a sinner.

Now this is also a new character of his goodness towards the sinner; a character very proper to encourage him in his diffidence: this goodness even extends so far, that I am afraid the sinner should take too great an assurance from thence, to persist in sin. Indeed, what a goodness is it, to expect the penance of him who has abused every thing that ought to induce him to do it? What is it to expect the sinner? It is to bear patiently with his in-
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sults, his contempts, and the unworthy preference he gives to all creatures. To expect the sinner, is to allow him time to be a sinner, and to aggravate his sin. To expect the sinner, it seems to me, O my saviour, is to risk thy own glory, and the whole fruit of thy passion. Can any thing better demonstrate the excess of thy compassion towards sinners?

Doubtless, it is not out of impotency that God acts in this manner: on the contrary, says the Scripture, it is because he is infinite in his power, that he seems to be afraid to exercise it, and that he restrains it, in order to give place to penance. To be able to do all, is commonly among men a title to have no pity of any person; but in God it is a reason to spare, and to manage the weakness of his creatures. O Lord, says the wise man, *thou art merciful, because thou art omnipotent; and it is thy power which engages thee to take no notice of our frailties.* [Sap. xi.] Now what greater patience, and more extensive goodness, can there be, than to have his enemy in his hands, to have it in his power to punish him, without any difficulty, risk, or injustice; and yet to spare him, even when he is insulting and furious!

Saul perceived that *David* really loved him, when he knew that this holy man, whom he pursued without intermission to destroy him, had had it in his power to be revenged of him,

him, by taking away his life, and yet had spared him. [1 Kings xxiv. 16. xxvi. 21.] That prince was moved thereby to compassion, he shed tears, called *David* his son, blessed him, and said to him with astonishment, I plainly see that you love me, and that my life is precious in your sight, since you spared me when you had so fair an opportunity of taking away my life. Indeed, *who is it that shall hold his enemy in his hands, and shall let him go without being revenged on him.* [1 Kings xxiv. 20.] May we not say the same of him whom *David* represented, and who is a thousand times preferable to him in mercy? How can it be, O my Saviour! that thou shouldst be so patient to bear with me, and to spare me so long? Alas! I am in thy hands, and it depended but on thee a thousand times to destroy me: this, O Lord, manifests to me how much I ought to confide in thy mercies. If thou hast been so good towards me whilst I provoked thee by my crimes; what will thy tenderness be, now that I have recourse to thee, and endeavour to appease thee by my tears?

When I think indeed on one hand upon the stupidity of man, who dares to insult his God; and on the other upon the patience of God, who winks at the insults of man, it seems to me as if I saw a little child in its mother's arms. This child wanting the use of reason,
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is sometimes in a bad humour : it grows impatient, it is angry, it cries, it strikes with its little hands the breast of its mother that bears it, and endeavours to satiate its weak wrath. What vengeance shall the mother take for the rashness of that child ? She presses it the more tenderly upon her heart, she augments her caresses, she flatters it, and offers it her breast and her milk to appease it. This is all her vengeance. If that child had knowledge, what should it think in beholding so much sweetness ? Let us give it for a moment the use of reason, which nature refuses it. What will it think, what will it judge, when its passion is over ? Truly it will be astonished at the rashness it has had to be provoked against her that holds it in her arms, and needs but open them to dash it to pieces against the ground. But at the same time, will it not be afraid that this good mother should refuse to pardon it those little furies ? Will it not see on the contrary, that they are, as one may say, already pardoned ; since she caresses it so tenderly, when she could have avenged herself so easily ?

Thus it is that God holds us in his arms, and thus it is that he deals with us : thus it is that he caresses us, as one may say, in the very midst of our wildest furies. That we might not doubt of it, he himself has dictated this comparison to his prophet : *He is like a nurse,*

nurse, says he, that careffes the child in her bosom which she carries there. [Osee. xi.] And in another place he says himself: *hearken my dear children, whom I hold in my bosom; thus I will carry you, and will carry you until old age, and until grey hair; I have done it, and will do it; I will carry you, and will save you.* [Isai. xlii.] And again: *tho' a mother should want tenderness towards her little children, yet I will never want it towards you: Can a woman forget her child, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb.* [Isai. xlix.] Let us learn therefore to correspond to so much goodness by making suitable returns on our parts. Let the tenderness of our confidence correspond to the tenderness of his love. Tho' sinners as we are, let us address ourselves to him with a lively hope in his goodness; since he not only expects, menaces, and careffes the sinner, but also receives him with mercy when he returns to him. A fourth character of the goodness of our God towards sinners; a character so proper to encourage those again, whom the fear of his wrath throws into dejection.

SECTION XIV.

Fourthly, God receives the sinner with goodness, at the moment he returns to him.

INDEED, why should not God receive sinners in their penance, who has bestowed so many benefits upon them in their obduracy? It is true, your sins are numerous; they are enormous; you have crouched too long in them; but what then! are your sins more odious to God, now that you detest them, that you bemoan them, that you fear his wrath, than they were when you loved them more than him, and when you insulted his mercy? At that time he knew all the malice and enormity of them, and yet he suffered you so patiently: shall he be more inexorable at present, when you yourself condemn your criminal attachments with all your heart? At that time you offended him with deliberate purpose, with reflection, and with malice; and he loved you, he sought you, he called you, he heaped benefits upon you, even unknown to you, and even when he foresaw the abuse you would make of his favours. Once more, at that time he loved you, and his love was even great. If benefits be the proof of love; if great benefits be the proof of great love: then to judge of his love by

by the benefits, he loved you greatly, tenderly, and constantly. How could it be, that he should have ceased to love you at present, now that you are submissive and penitent, that you tremble at the sight of his judgments, and are humbled under the weight of your crimes? Should it be possible that he had conceived thoughts of wrath, of chastisement, and reprobation against you? Could he so much as think of this? Would not this be making of your God, a fantastical and unjust God, that loves the impious, and rejects the penitent?

No undoubtedly, he does not reject them; and if we were to search into his designs, we should find that the same reason which engages him to expect the sinner, equally engages him to receive him. Why does he expect the sinner with patience? This St. *Peter* teaches us, when he says, *that he uses patience because of us, being unwilling that any should perish, but that all should have recourse to penance.* [2 Peter iii.] No, he does not will that the sinner should perish, he even would have him not to perish: he would wish that all should have the sentiments of conversion and salvation; he desires it, he wills it, and is afflicted when they do not correspond to his desires; and he expects as if he would see whether they will not let themselves be moved there-to in the end. What greater joy is there for him who thus desires our salvation, than to

see his desires accomplished, and his cares become efficacious by the return of those whose conversion he desires to procure?

It is not therefore the character of our God, to reject the sinner in his return, after having spared him in his wandering. It seems to me that I hear him say with goodness to every one of us, what *Joseph* formerly said to his brethren, to recover them from the consternation they were in, the very moment they discovered him in *Egypt*: *it is I*, says he to them, *it is I that am Joseph, I am your brother, approach, fear nothing.* [Gen. xlv.] Those brethren that were formerly so cruel, that had conspired his ruin, and who by selling him to strangers, had delivered him up to all the evils which slavery draws after it; those brethren, I say, surprized to find him so powerful, and the master of all *Pharaoh's* empire, were frightened at the remembrance of the bad treatment they had done him. *Perhaps he may remember the injury he has suffered; and will avenge himself upon us, say they amongst themselves, for all the evil that we have done to him.* [Gen. l.] A beautiful image of the fright of a sinner at the hour of death, when he nearly considers the majesty and power of God, which he had forgotten during the course of a criminal life.

However *Joseph* had much nobler sentiments than those which his brethren were afraid they should find in him. He penetrated into the

the cause of their trouble, and before they durst speak to him, he prevented them: they had not yet asked his pardon, and he had already granted it them. He speaks the first, to say these comforting words to them: *fear nothing*. I have forgotten all that is past, do you forget it likewise, and be encouraged. Approach me, that I may embrace you; I will be no otherwise avenged of you than by my caresses: cease then from henceforth to fear, as your fear would be injurious to my friendship: *I am Joseph your brother*, and will always be your brother by my tenderness, even as I am such by nature.

Of all the figures of Jesus Christ in the old Testament, I find none more sensible than this of *Joseph*. He resembled our Saviour in the persecution which his brethren excited against him, in the treason with which they sold him, in his slavery, and in his imprisonment. He resembled him still the more in his glory, and in the safety of *Egypt*. But according to my opinion, the most striking resemblance is that which I find in his tenderness towards brethren that deserved it so little. Thus it is, O divine Saviour! that thou treatest us; and if we are as guilty towards thee, as the brethren of *Joseph* were against him, thou art not less merciful than that patriarch; since he was particularly merciful that he might be a figure of thee. Why then shall I not be encouraged in my terrors, when thou sayest to me still

more tenderly than he did : *it is I that am the merciful Joseph fear nothing?* Ah! why not fear? Because *I am your brother*; and I should be an unnatural brother if I sought to avenge myself. If thou wert not penitent, I would be thy judge; but since thou returnest to me, I will take no other quality in regard of thee, than that of a brother, nor will I have other sentiments than those of friendship and tenderness towards thee.

SECTION XV.

A continuation of the same subject. How God receives sinners. The parable of the prodigal child. The misery of that libertine an image of ours.

SUCH is the tenderness with which our God receives the sinner: thus it is that he encourages him in his fear; and that he may omit nothing to inspire us with those sentiments of confidence, which he knows to be so necessary for us, he has represented that tenderness still more clearly in the parable of the prodigal child. *What is that father,* says *Tertulian*, *that father who is so merciful and so ready to pardon, and who receives his son with so much goodness? It is undoubtedly our God, who is more our father than all the fathers of the earth, who is more merciful than*
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all the merciful of the earth. But before we discover the mercies of our God in this symbole, let us begin by discovering our own wanderings, represented by those of that libertine child. [Tertul. de pœnit. c. 8.]

Of the children of that good father, I immediately see it is the youngest that rises up against him. [Luk. xv. 12.] It is the lot of youth to be unable to suffer constraint, to desire to be under its own conduct, and not to hearken to the counsels of any person; to be inconsiderate and rash, and to follow blindly its own passions. This blindness and rashness is common to youth and to us, who are in this life like undocible children, that rebel against constraint, that are provoked at those that would conduct them, and expose themselves without fear to a thousand dangers, which they are ignorant of.

That child asks his father for the portion of his inheritance, saying: *Father, give me the portion of the substance which falls to my lot.* It was not yet the time for him to enjoy it: he was to merit it by his services with his father, and in the mean time to be content with the small liberalities which an indulgent father bestows on his children, whilst he manages for them the bulk of his fortune in order to enlarge it, and to enrich them hereafter. But that child cannot wait for a solid happiness which is preparing for him: he rather chuses to have a *portion* of that inheritance immedi-

ately, than to preserve a certain right of sharing one day all the riches of it. A new fymbole of the unworthy choice we make, by preferring the actual enjoyment of the miserable felicities of the earth, to all the happiness of that abundant inheritance, which God our father designs us. These transitory and earthly felicities, are but as *portions*, and small portions of it: yet it is for these light portions, that we abandon the right which we have to the eternal riches of the heavenly inheritance.

The father therefore gives to his son what that son asks of him. Provoked with the procedure of that rash son, he could immediately have turned him out of his house; but he cannot resolve to do it: and if I read rightly in his heart, I see that he desired, at least, that the same son should not leave him. However that ungrateful son finds the presence of his father too importunate and too restraining for him. Therefore he departs from him of his own accord, and flies from his house; and to conceal himself from his admonitions, *he goes into a far distant country*. But what then had this father done to his son to force him to fly from him in this manner, and to make him despise his tenderness? Alas! he had done nothing at all. It was neither reproaches nor chastisements that made that unnatural son rebel. It seems that this too indulgent a father could not resolve to reproach
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or chastise him; since he grants him without delay all that he asks of him. And for our parts, when we give ourselves up to those criminal pleasures, which we are willing to taste upon earth; when we fly from our God, and depart from him, is it for having received any bad treatment from him? What an ingratitude! To fly from him *that heaps his benefits upon us, and never reproaches us with them.* [James i. 5.]

In this dreadful separation, what will that most imprudent son do? He will very soon have lost every thing, and have squandered all: *he spent all his substance by living luxuriously.* And as for our parts, when we precipitate ourselves into the abyss of sin, what becomes of all those pleasures we think we enjoy? How long do they last? A moment. O dreadful moment! which is followed with regret and disgust, with bitterness, grief, and infirmities. But what becomes of *that portion* of graces and spiritual benefits, with which our heavenly father had enriched us? All is squandered away: we have scarce left the salutary remorse of a troubled conscience, which reproaches itself with all its disorders, and which seems remaining to us of all the goods we have lost, only to be the avenger of their dissipation.

Behold what is the shame of our wanderings, so nearly resembling those of the prodigal child! But our return resembles his

no less; and it is important to reflect upon it, that we may have a better knowledge of the mercy of our heavenly father who vouchsafes to receive us. In the first place, it is only after long delays, perhaps after many years, that we return to God, like travellers going into a far country, who after long tours return at length into their own country, which thought it had lost them for ever. This is what the prodigal child of the gospel did. It is only after having seen years of abundance and droughth successively elapse, that he returns into himself: *and after he had consumed all, there arose a great famine in that country, and he begun to want.* [Luk. xv. 14.] Again, why does he return into himself? Alas! it is necessity which forces him to it: he is dying of hunger, he is devoured by it, he no longer knows what resource to find, *how many hired servants abound with bread in my father's house, and I am perishing here with hunger.* And as to our parts, let us confess it, when we return to God, is it indeed with our full consent? Is it not the vexation of being despised by the world, the infidelity of friends, the loss of goods, of reputation, or of protectors; the pains of an infirmity which consumes us by little and little; is it not some of these causes, which forces us to have recourse to him, when every thing fails us, and when we are forsaken by all?

That son at last takes a courageous resolution:

tion: *I will arise, says he, and will go to my father, and I will say to him: Father, I have sinned.* His resolution is followed with the effect: he departs, he sets off upon his journey, and draws near the parental house. But what then? Shall he dare to appear before his father, before his brother, and before the domestics of the house, in that shabby condition to which he is reduced? I represent him to myself in the likeness of one of those mendicants that is disfigured by hunger, and stript by poverty; that has nothing left but rags which half cover him, and hang about him in tatters; and that can scarce keep life and soul together by some few alms, drawn from the passengers by mere importunity. Was not this enough to augment his father's anger, to present himself before him in this condition? Was it not even exposing himself not to be known by him? Alas! we know it; and when our soul returns to God by the beginnings of penance, it ought to be much more horrible in his sight; because the pollutions of sin are a thousand times more frightful than the horrors of poverty.

However, shall the prodigal son have nothing to present to his father in order to appease him? Of all the goods he had received from him, shall he have spared nothing to remit into his hands? At least, shall he not find some excuse to justify his conduct, and to render it the less odious? Is there not some

motive of interest whereby he may engage his father to receive him? Has he not yet some right to the inheritance that he may sacrifice to him, in order to appease his wrath? Not at all; this he grants himself. He is no longer worthy to be reckoned in the number of the children, he should be too happy in being received into the paternal house in the rank of a servant, *I am no longer worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants*: that gains his living by the sweat of his brow. As to excuses, he has none, he seeks none, he invents none. He prepares himself to say quite ingenuously, that he is the most guilty of all men; *and I will say, father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*; that heaven itself ought to be interested in his punishment; and that he has nothing at all but tears to offer to his father. Such is the poverty and misery to which sin has reduced us; that we have neither merits, excuses, nor riches, to present; all is reduced to some tears, and those are our only resource. But this resource is seemingly but a very small matter, and this is what terrifies us. How shall a few tears, we say, be able to efface so many crimes? How shall our heavenly father be contented with them? How shall he receive us? How shall he pardon us?

Let us silence our diffidences; for they are injurious to our God. If we know the poverty and malice of our own hearts, let us learn

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to know the goodness of his. If we have only tears to offer him, he asks nothing else; and he has already prevented them to come to us. Let us endeavour to find him, by all the steps of that indulgent father of the gospel, who we know was a figure of him.

SECTION XVI.

A continuation of the same parable. An image of the goodness of God in that of this father of a family, who receives his son.

THE prodigal was yet at a distance from the house, when his father perceived him. I admire the vigilance of that father, whom I represent to myself as quite uneasy about the absence of his son. He often goes on every side, to see if he shall not perceive him. At length he spies him, and sees him even at a great distance. Love guides his eyes, and makes them discover him after whom he sighs. Without this, how should he have discovered a son so disfigured at so great a distance, whom every other person would not have known close by? He saw him therefore, and his heart was moved. And with what was he moved? Was it not with indignation and wrath? No, those sentiments indeed would have been just, but they are not his. *If he were moved, it was not with*
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wrath; it was not even with such a pity as we might conceive for a miserable person, that does not concern us. It was with such a mercy and tenderness as a mother feels for the child that she has carried in her womb; *and he was moved with mercy.* The proof I have for it is, because that indulgent father ran immediately towards his son, to prevent him: *and running he fell upon his neck, and kissed him.*

But upon what were the thoughts of that father employed? ought not the gravity of the father, and the authority of his age, to have restrained him? Besides, did he know whether his son were penitent, or whether on the contrary he did not come to insult him? Now if that indulgent father would listen to nothing but his own compassion, would he not have manifested it sufficiently, by taking a few steps towards that libertine son; What necessity was there for him to run to him? Ought he not even to have been afraid of exposing himself, and bemeaning his dignity of a father, by abasing himself so far as to prevent him, to whom he would have granted favours enough by receiving him? Likewise would it not have been more proper to have dissembled his joy, in order to have given that prodigal son a greater sense of the whole enormity of his fault, and to have made him purchase the pardon he came to ask? O the poor reflections of human prudence, which true tenderness

ness does not hearken to! The tenderness of that father is above all this. It transports him, he is no longer master of it, nor even of himself: he is distracted, *he runs to his son.* Love guides his staggering feet, and confirms his steps: *he throws himself about the neck of his son* to embrace him. He has forgotten that this son is criminal; and he has forgotten it, to remember only that he is his son. *He kisses him,* he caresses him, he presses him to his breast, and weeps over him, without scarce allowing him the liberty to speak, to accuse himself, and to beg pardon. He restores to him all his friendship, and sheds more tears of joy over him, than that penitent son sheds tears of contrition.

However, would it not have been proper to have made him some gentle reproaches for his ingratitude? Such reproaches, in my opinion, are not incompatible with tenderness. It is true he might have made him some reproaches; but there is still more mercy in sparing him the shame of them, who has already confusion enough. Jesus Christ, who was pleased to animate our confidence by this parable, was undoubtedly afraid that these always humbling reproaches should still intimidate our weakness, which is capable of being terrified with the slightest pains. Instead therefore of staying to make his son some just reproaches, that good father loads him with benefits; he is even urgent to do it upon

upon the spot, without waiting till he had tried the perseverance of that son by some delays. He immediately puts all the domestics of the house in motion, to seek new cloaths, to find a robe worthy of his birth, and to bring him a precious ring: *bring speedily the chief robe, and put it upon him; put a ring upon his finger, and shoes upon his feet; and bring the fattened calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and make good cheer.* He ordered a magnificent feast to be prepared; he sent for musicians; the friends and relations are invited to come and partake of the joy of that amiable father; he imposes silence on his eldest son, who jealous of so many caresses, would call back the remembrance of the crimes of his younger brother; but he would have them to be forgotten, as he himself had forgotten them; *My son, said he, was dead, and he is risen again; he was lost, and is found again.* He does not say, my son was a sinner, and he is converted; my son was disobedient, and he has submitted. No, he has forgotten his disobediences, his crimes, and debaucheries. It seems it was only an innocent misfortune that had separated him from him. *This son, says he, was lost, and behold he is found again.*

It is needless to make the application of this parable; the sense of it is clear enough; but if we have a right sense of the application, cannot we be sensible of all the confidence with which it ought to inspire us? Indeed, though

though our crimes be enormous, shall they be more enormous than the crimes of that libertine and unnatural son? Has our penance been delatory, was not his delatory also? Perhaps it was only necessity, affliction, and grief, that has been the occasion or cause of our conversion: had his a more noble or more disinterested principle? When we return to God we bring no merit with us: had he more merit than we to present to his father? The only merit he had, was his quality of a son, his confidence, and his sorrow: are we not as well as he the children of God? We already feel a lively sorrow for having provoked him; let us also add to it confidence in his mercy. Let us go boldly to him, and we shall be received by him with as much goodness, as that libertine was received by his amiable father. Thus it is that God receives all penitent sinners. Thus it is that he pardons sinners; and it is *this pardon* which forms the last character of his mercy towards us, which I have yet to speak of. This fifth character, no doubt, is already sufficiently proved by what I have said; since to receive the sinner with goodness, and to pardon him, is the same thing. But it is just to make some new reflections in few words upon this pardon, which are too consolatory to be omitted.

SECTION XVII.

The fifth character of the goodness of God towards sinners; when he receives them, he readily pardons them.

IF we add to the parable which we have just explained, the examples of those sinners whom God has pardoned, and whose histories are related to us in the holy scripture, it seems to me, that we ought no longer to have any diffidence left; and that how culpable soever we be, we might say with St. Bernard, *that there are no wounds so deep and so mortal, but what are to be healed by the mercy of God, and the blood of Jesus Christ.*

Who in the world was more guilty than a Manasses King of Juda? His abominations and his crimes were dreadful; such as sorceries, magic, idolatry, impurity, cruelty, and injustice. This idea of the impiety of that king will be conceived perhaps, when it is known, that not content with having abolished the worship of God throughout his kingdom, in order to substitute in its place that of the most infamous idols; not content with having slain the prophets of the Lord; he himself sacrificed his own children to the devil, and immolated them thro' the fire, according to the barbarous custom of the idolators of that time. That prince forsaken of God became

came a captive : he was loaded with chains, and thrown into the bottom of a den ; and it was in his misery that he begun to return to God. He lifted up his voice to complain, and to beg mercy of him ; and that God of goodness heard him, he graciously heard him, and even restored him to his throne and his power, which his crimes had bereaved him of.

Who was more villainous than an *Achab*, another king of *Juda*, and another model of all manner of abominations ? The worship of *Baal*, the persecution of *Elias*, the massacre of the prophets, the blood of *Naboth*, and the furies of *Jesabel* his wife, demonstrate it sufficiently. That prince humbled himself one day at the voice of a prophet, who menaced him : he was sorrowful and afflicted, he vested himself with a hair-cloth, and walked with a contrite air. Frail conversion which continued not long ! However it was so agreeable to God, as to obtain a delay of the chastisements with which he had threatened him.

What crimes were more crying than those of *David* ? A double adultery, and an adultery made more criminal by his treachery and massacre of an innocent person. Till then, he was a prophet and a saint ; but the holier and the more favoured of God he had been, the more enormous was his crime. What

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an ingratitude was it in a man so greatly favoured? But what a scandal was it to see a saint become so criminal? What a scandal was it, that he should be seen to add obduracy to his crime? Indeed that prince was at least near a year without acknowledging his crimes, and without doing penance: the criminal fruit of his adultery was already born, when the prophet came to speak to him from God. He therefore stood in need of a prophet, and of an extraordinary mission, to recall him to his duty. That prophet speaks, and the prince that hears him, returns to himself, and acknowledges his crime. He says but these words, *I have sinned*, and the prophet immediately added: *God has pardoned thee.* And David said to Nathan, *I have sinned against the Lord: and Nathan said to David: the Lord has also taken away thy sin;* and he told him this without any bitter reproaches. God speedily pardons a sinner, who seems to return but slowly. - [2 Kings xii. 13.]

Such was the facility which God Almighty made use of, to grant pardon at a time, which St. Cyprian calls a time of severity and vengeance. What will he not do now in a time of mercy, and under a law, called by excellency, *a law of grace*? What has not Jesus Christ done to give us proofs of it? A sinful woman is the scandal of *Jerusalem* by her debaucheries, and the son of God grants her

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the pardon of her crimes, as soon as she begins to ask it. *Zacheus* is a public usurer, and as soon as he has taken a resolution to restore the wealth he had acquired by his injustices, at that time, and even before the execution of it, his crimes are remitted, and salvation enters into his house. *Zacheus* standing said to the Lord, *Lo half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded any one of any thing, I restore it four fold*: *Jesus* said to him, *that to day salvation is wrought to this house*. [Luk. xix. 8.] An adulterous woman is surprized in her wickedness, and *Jesus* Christ in delivering her from death, which she deserved according to the law, imposed no other penance upon her than her own confusion, and the precaution he gave her to sin no more. A noted thief, after committing many crimes, is fastened to a gibbet, he is ready to expire, and in that last moment he has recourse to the son of God. *Jesus* hears him, he graciously hears him, and gives him admittance into his glory; *this day*, says he to him, *thou shalt be with me in paradise*. [Luk. xxiii. 43.]

It is true, that the same thief then touched, as one may say, the cross of *Jesus* Christ, that cross which has been a source of salvation for the whole world. It is true likewise, that being so near that salutary cross, we ought to be the less surprized to see that he is the first that experiences the effects of its power. But if we be guilty as he was, who hinders us from

from approaching that precious wood, as he did, and from lifting up our eyes towards him that died upon the same cross, to merit for us the pardon of our wanderings, *Let us lift up our eyes towards that holy mountain, from whence we are to expect help.* [Pf. cxx.] Let us look up at leisure : alas ! what shall we see ? We shall see there a spectacle the most capable of exciting confidence with love in the hearts of all sinners : the blood of a God flowing for their salvation ; the heart of God lying open to shew itself to us with all its tenderness. If you still doubt of that tenderness, says St. Bernard, behold his heart, which shews itself to you such as it is : it was opened only to make itself known to you, and to encourage you. Thro' his deep wounds it is easy for you to perceive that heart, which has motion only for you, and which has nothing but tenderness towards you.

Therefore it is thither, says that father again, that I will retire : it is in that heart which was opened for my salvation, that I will seek an asylum against the wrath of my God ; in it I will put my confidence, and my confidence will be solid. True it is that my crimes are great, continues that father so devout and so humble ; they are but too great, and my confidence is agitated with fear on that account ; but not so much as to amount to trouble and desolation ; because the wounds of my saviour encouraging my soul, with
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what mortal wounds can it be wounded, that are proof against this remedy? What fear and desolation is there that shall not be assuaged by the efficacy of its virtue? These were the sentiments of *St. Bernard*: what hinders us from finding with him the same consolation in the wounds of our saviour?

SECTION XVIII.

Sixthly, God not only pardons the penitent sinner; but he even seems to favour him more than the just.

GOD therefore pardons penitent sinners the whole enormity of their crimes; one would almost say, that he favours them more than the just. *There is, says Jesus Christ, more joy in heaven for a sinner that is converted, and does penance, than for ninety-nine just persons that persevere, and have no need of penance.* [Luk. xv. 7.] It likewise seems that he recompenses them more liberally; and we see some holy penitents more glorified upon earth, by the prodigies which God grants to their invocation, than others whose innocent life would seem to merit a greater distinction. This is because the measure of the preference and rank which the saints hold with God, proceeds from the fervour of love. Now if the penitent prevail in love over the just

just person, it is not astonishing that he should surpass him in glory, which is chiefly the recompence of love. An edifying history which I will relate in few words, may serve to confirm all that I have said.

Thais, well known in ecclesiastic history by the fervour of her penance, was no less known by the disorders of her impudicity: no girl ever carried effrontery and wickedness to a greater length. The holy old man *Paphnutius*, inspired of God to labour in her conversion, departed from the desert to go in quest of that strayed sheep, and to bring it back to the sheepfold. I shall say nothing of that holy industry, more admirable than imitable, which he made use of to gain her to God. It suffices me to say, that having happily engaged her not only to leave off sinning, but also to avoid all the occasions of her sin, he conducted her into the desert, and shut her up alone in a cell, the door of which he caused to be walled up, only leaving a small opening in order to supply her with a little bread and water, which was her whole nourishment. That holy sinner sensibly affected with the horror of her crimes, submitted herself voluntarily to a penance, which was so severe for a young person accustomed to pleasure, delicacy, and company. In this solitude she lived a long time, wholly occupied with the care of bemoaning her past crimes, and imploring the mercy of God. She even

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yet in her prayer durst not pronounce the name of God, whose help she invoked; and fearing to defile it, if pronounced by her too impure mouth, she only said: *thou who didst form me, have mercy on me.* Three years were elapsed without her having relaxed any thing, either of her austerity, or of her tears; and God, to whom they were agreeable, was pleased to make it known to a holy man whose name was *Paul*, a disciple of St. *Anthony*, whose simplicity had obtained him the beautiful name of *Paul the simple*, a quality as precious in the eyes of God, as it seems contemptible in the eyes of the world. That holy man being in prayer, saw in spirit a throne preparing in heaven: all the heavenly court seemed very solicitous about adorning it: thus did the splendor and magnificence of that throne surpass all that can be imagined; and the angels of heaven seemed to shew some impatience to receive the happy mortal for whom so elegant a place was destined. For whom then is that throne, said the holy man within himself? Shall it not be for my father *Anthony*? For what other person can merit so great a glory from God, than he who has done upon earth such great things for the glory of God? He employed himself with these thoughts, when an angel approaching, said to him, in order to free him from his inquietude: this resplendent throne is designed

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for *Thais* the sinful woman; for she has acquired it by her penance and her tears.

SECTION XIX.

A continuation of the same subject. To be too greatly terrified about our sins, is sometimes a subtilty of self-love.

I Think I have said enough for the encouragement of timid souls, who frightened with the sight of their sins, abandon themselves to discouragement. But before I pass to another reflection, I am to acquaint those uneasy and timorous souls, with a subtle snare which the devil lays for them, and which is not easy to be perceived; because it is hidden under the deceitful coverings of a salutary contrition. Oftentimes those fears, those discouragements, and those desolations, are less the effect of the holy sorrows of penance, than of a secret pride, which cannot bear the sight of its own imperfections. A person is grieved, is afflicted, and is disturbed; and this without measure: and for what? Is it because God is offended? No, but because he is not perfect enough; or rather because he does not see perfection enough in himself. Pride, which loves to have complacency for itself, cannot bear the sight of so many weaknesses: and

and he that still preserves some remains of this vice, with which we are kneaded, if I may presume to make use of this expression, not only would willingly be perfect, but he would wish to enjoy the consolation of knowing that he is so, of seeing that he has virtue, and that he is agreeable to God. With this secret desire, how can he bear the sight of his daily failings, and the remembrance of his old irregularities?

In this state also the heart, which is profoundly proud, is easily disturbed with that sight, and with the remembrance of its imperfections: it is afflicted at them; but with an affliction of dejection, which disgusts it, gnaws it, discourages it, and allows it no peace. Whilst it thinks it is penetrated with a lively contrition, it sometimes is troubled only with its own self-love, and with an interior sentiment, which I presume to call a *spiritual ambition*: an ambition which is also found sometimes in a heart from whence all other ambition is banished. The spirit of God remains neither in discouragement, nor in trouble; there is but the tempter that finds his advantage in the one and the other. That affliction and sorrow which proceeds from the Holy Spirit, has something in it more courageous, more consolatory, and more peaceable; and he that is animated with it, looks, it is true, upon his own faults with humiliation; but if he be confounded, he is not discour-

raged ; neither is he more disturbed than a gardener, when he sees fruitless weeds grow up in his parterre, who endeavours speedily to root them up, and is not dejected with them. Neither is the true penitent dejected any more than he ; his very faults seem to fortify him in his fervour, and to animate his confidence by augmenting his humility. If he be afflicted on account of his sins, he freely accepts the humiliation which he receives from thence. Let scrupulous and timorous souls give attention to this truth ; and let them carefully avoid that rock I have just discovered to them. It is necessary now to guard them from another, which perhaps occasions no less shipwrecks, and which I shall discourse a little more fully upon, because the subject deserves it.

SECTION XX.

The last objection of diffident souls : the small number of the elect. A general reflection upon this truth.

WHATEVER confidence a person may have in the mercy of God, altho' he know that it is more abundant than our crimes are enormous, yet there remains for just souls a last subject of fear, whose effect is as dreadful as the former, and upon which it is not so easy perhaps to calm it. This is what faith teaches us of the small number of the elect.

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After all, a person sometimes says, I know that the number of the elect is small: how then should I dare to flatter myself with being of that number? To view all the disorders of my past life, and all my daily infidelities, have I not much more reason to believe, that I shall be of the number of that multitude of sinners, that God reprobates in his wrath! This is the temptation! It is easy to conceive into what a dejection such a thought is capable of casting those, who give themselves up to it.

This temptation is not new: even in the time of the apostles, the minds of some were disturbed with it; and it was to encourage them, that St. *Peter* made the faithful understand in one of his epistles, that instead of being discouraged for fear they were not predestinated, it was the business of every one of them to secure his predestination by his good works: *be careful that by your good works ye may make your vocation and election sure.* [2. Pet. I. 10.] The holy fathers, and masters of a spiritual life, have taken the same care, according to the example of the apostle, and have drawn from the truths of faith, a thousand prudent reflections proper to oppose this temptation, and to encourage those whom it might disturb. This will be found in most books of piety, and it would be unprofitable for me to repeat it here. I shall confine myself therefore to one single reflection, which seems to me the most efficacious for encouraging

raging pious souls, and which not only deprives the temptation of what is terrifying upon this subject, but even teaches us to draw a motive of consolation from thence.

It is true the number of the elect is very small; but will you not be discouraged by this truth? Reflect upon all the motives you have to think that you are of that happy number, and then all your terror will be changed into consolation. Indeed, what have you to fear from the smallness of the number of the elect, if you have great reason to believe that you are comprehended in it, and that God cherishes you with that particular love, which serves to procure the salvation of the saints, by the happy concatenation of those singular graces, which support them in the divers states of life? Certainly he that shall discover this merciful attention of God upon him, so far from being troubled with the truth I am speaking of, ought on the contrary to find in it the powerfulest motive of the most lively consolation. Now this is what I can inspire into every one of those souls, whom the devil endeavours to induce to despair or discouragement, by the temptation I am speaking of. I say it boldly: there is no person but what finds in his heart, in those singular graces which he has received from God, in the favours he has granted him, in the sentiments with which he has inspired him, in the protection which he has received from him in perilous occasions,

occasions, and in all the other circumstances of his life, very strong marks of this particular good will of God, who, tho' he be merciful towards all men, yet he cherishes his elect with a special love, and conducts them to conversion and perseverance through all the most secure paths.

I do not so much as speak here of that common assurance we all have, that this God of goodness loves us sufficiently to be willing to save us; nor of the obligation we have to believe that he has a true desire to do it, which is followed with such powerful helps as render salvation and perseverance possible to us. Neither do I speak of the advantage we have had to participate more particularly in those helps by means of the sacraments, which have regenerated us in him, reconciled us with him, and nourished us with his most precious body; nor of the promises he has made us, not to give us up to temptations that are above our strength, and to grant us readily and infallibly all that we shall ask in the name of his son, without excepting perseverance and salvation from thence. I might however insist upon them, and should easily shew, that those graces, tho' common to many, are nevertheless particular to each of us, and proper to excite our confidence; since they put infallible means into our hands, to secure our predestination, if we make that use of them to which he has predestinated them.

SECTION XXI.

Another reflection upon this truth. Confidence in God is a means to secure in some manner our predestination.

NEITHER shall I dwell upon another means which he has given to us all, in order to facilitate to every one of us in particular the success of our salvation: yet I cannot dispense myself from saying a few words upon it; since it is necessarily a part of my subject. What is this means? I have already insinuated it, and shall willingly repeat it here; it is the very confidence of succeeding in the affair of eternal salvation, which gives an entrance to it. It is this which is one of the most probable marks of predestination. We have a difficulty to conceive this paradox; because we judge according to our faint ideas, and according to what passes amongst us, where hope and confidence itself do not always render our desires efficacious: yet to hope with confidence in God, and in the affair of our salvation, is not only a means to facilitate our victory over every obstacle, as I have said elsewhere; but it is even in some manner securing the crown of it to ourselves. Why so? because God himself has promised it; and his word, that eternal word, which cannot change, is engaged

gaged therein: *Know ye*, says he in his Scripture, *that no man has hoped in me, that was ever confounded in his hope.* [Eccles. ii.] and again, *hope does not confound.* [Rom. v.] And in another place: *Lord, all those that expect the benefits from thee which thou hast promised them, shall not be deceived.* [Ps. xxiv.] And again, *he saves all those that hope in him.* [Ps. xvi.] The prophet wholly penetrated with that assurance, cried out in the transports of his joy: *O Lord, I have lifted up my soul and my heart towards thee: thou art my God, in thee I hope, I shall not blush with my confidence, because it will never be in vain.* [Ps. xxiv.] Let no one be astonished, that God has given so much efficacy to confidence. Confidence, as I have said, is inseparable from love: it is even a kind of love, or at least it is the tenderest and most earnest mark of all sorts of love. Now it is known that there is nothing impossible to love, and that it is love which opens the gates of heaven.

Indeed, how could God resist this confidence? Is not his glory, his love, and his heart, interested in not deceiving him who has an entire confidence in him? A son says to his father, I rely upon you in such a manner, that I shall receive from your hand the rank, the charge, the covenant, or the inheritance, which you intend to give me. A servant says to his master, I will not think on any fortune but that which

you yourself will make me; I will serve you faithfully, and will rely on your goodness for the recompence of my labour. One friend associated with another friend in the way of traffic, says to him with confidence: I rely upon yourself for the decision of the affairs which are to be regulated between us; I depend upon your integrity and equity, and will have no other arbiter than yourself. Shall that friend, that master, that father, be insensible to such an entire confidence; if they have friendship and probity? If they are jealous of their own reputation and glory, will they not be excited thereby to do more than could have been expected from them? For my part, were I in their place, I should be moved to compassion by such a confidence, and should think myself much more indebted to him that should act in this manner, than to him, who distrusting my sincerity or exactness, should dispute with me in making his conditions of agreement; and who uneasy every moment about the object of his hopes, would willingly know if he is to have all his securities. In a word, I should think it the interest of my honour and glory, not to deceive the generous confidence that any one should have placed in my probity.

Is then our God less knowing in the interests of his glory, and is he less jealous of it? *I will not give my glory to another.* [Isai. xlii. 8.] If he be jealous of it, as he says in his holy
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Scripture, will he suffer those, who, full of a tender love towards him, rely upon his goodness; who instead of being uneasy about their predestination and their recompence, say with the prophet: *the Lord is good, he takes care of me, he will not let me want any thing, he will place me in the sojourn of abundance.* [Ps. xxii. 2.] Will he suffer those, I say, to be deceived in their holy confidence, and to have it in their power to complain one day, that after having relied upon his promises, they have found that they were vain?

It is therefore a kind of happy assurance for us, to find a means in our confidence, to make the affair of our salvation succeed; since the glory of God, and the truth of his word, are engaged, that we may not be deceived. With so easy and so efficacious a means, how can we doubt of our predestination? Is not this a sign that we are of the number of those whom God has chosen, that he has made known to us so easy and so certain a means to procure our salvation, and that he has put it into our hands? However I will not dwell upon this reflection, no more than upon the former, tho' they are both of them solid enough to put an end to our uncertainties. A diffident and uneasy man will say, that these advantages are common to all the faithful, and yet there are so many to whom they are unprofitable, and who perish.

SECTION XXII.

A principal answer to the former objection. The small number of the elect is a comfortable truth for those that have reason to believe they are of that small number. What are the marks of it? The first mark, is choice and vocation.

WHAT, indeed, will he say, who has a mind to be obstinate in his diffidences, when he is made to observe a thousand different kinds of particular and personal graces, which God has granted to him at all times, and which he still grants daily to him, which he does not grant to a thousand others, and which appear to be the same as those that he has granted to his well-beloved, in order to conduct them through the paths of penance and perseverance to the eternal crown? Indeed, what is predestination? but a choice which God makes of certain souls, whom he conducts by special graces to an assured crown. What ought this predestination to produce? personal graces, and particular helps, proportioned to the different states of life, and disposed according to the perilous circumstances, in which a man is found, in order to deliver him from thence. Let us speak it more clearly, and in three words: predestination ought to produce, *first*, choice and vocation; *secondly*, conversion and protection; and

and *thirdly*, perseverance. *Those whom God has predestinated*, says the apostle, *he has called them ; and those whom he has called, he has justified them ; and those whom he has justified, he has also glorified them.* [Rom. viii. 30] Now this is what those souls to whom I am speaking, will be able, no doubt, to discover in themselves, or rather in the conduct of God over them. Is not this enough to make them hope that they are of that happy number, how small soever it may be ?

For as to what concerns vocation and choice, can it be pointed out in a more sensible manner ? Compare, O ye faithful souls ! in order to discover it ; compare your state with that of the infidels, heretics, and schismatics, that cover the earth. The greatest part of the world is inhabited either by people that live without faith, or that have not the true faith. Catholicity does not occupy perhaps a fifth part of it. Again, among those that inhabit the countries, where the true faith is cultivated, how many libertines, devoutless, atheists, and impious, are there that live without faith in the very center of the faith ? How many others are there, that having nothing but the belief of the true religion, do not fulfil the obligations of it, for want of that *lively faith which works by charity* ? [Gal. v. 6.] How many live in a profound ignorance of what they ought to know ? How many others accumulate injustices, and enriching

riching themselves by that means, lay an obstacle to their salvation, which they will never surmount? How many render themselves guilty of all those crimes, upon which the apostle has pronounced, *that they who commit them shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?* [Gal. v. 21.] How many others, who being without many crimes, live in an entire oblivion of their salvation, and quite indifferent with regard to heaven? Take away almost all these, if they do not do penance, take them away from the number of the predestinate, and what will there remain, but a very small number of people that have a greater regard for faith, religion, piety, and justice, than to every thing else; who being uneasy about their salvation, labour seriously in it; or who after having given themselves up too easily to sin, think on expiating it by penance. Now it is no doubt to this small number that heaven is destined; and it is also to this small number that God has called you. He has chosen you preferably to a thousand others, in order to make you one of that dearly beloved number. How many graces has he granted you even to this present time, to enable you to enter into it? I do not say common and general graces, but those graces of predilection, and those personal favours, which he has not granted to all men, as he has done to you; which both clearly manifest the choice he has made
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of you for heaven, and the particular desire he has to save you; as if it were true, as it is impossible, that he should have abandoned all the rest of the universe.

S E C T I O N XXIII.

The second mark of predestination, conversion and a particular protection.

TO those distinguished graces of the choice and vocation which God has prevented you with, how many other graces as particular as them has he added also for your conversion, your sanctification, your protection, and your defence? Take a retrospect over all those years which are elapsed, and you will see therein a continual chain of a personal mercy, which has stamped every moment of your life with some singular graces prepared purposely for you, as if there had been but you upon earth that had obtained the attention and care of your God. Was it then to destroy you, to make you the victim of his wrath, and to reprobate you in his fury, that he did for you what he has not done for millions of christians, that were perhaps much better than you?

Now indeed I shall look back and take a view over the years of my past life, over those

those of infancy, of youth, or of an age of more maturity, where I behold such a successive connection of extraordinary mercies upon me, which I have no ways merited, that I cannot doubt but this God of goodness has a design to conduct me by the conversion of heart to final perseverance, and from thence to the crown which he has destined for his elect. After having preserved me in the womb of my mother, to make me avoid the accidents of a misfortunate birth before baptism had sanctified me; after *having been my God*, as the royal prophet said, *from the womb of my mother*, [Ps. xxi.] What care did he not take in my infancy, to prevent my youthful heart with the light of his grace, in order to arm it against the dangers which then surrounded it? If I have had holy parents, masters fearing God, and an education replenished with wisdom and piety, it was his amiable providence that had prepared those helps for me.

When my reason begun to display itself, and I opened my eyes to know the world, what sollicitude had not my Saviour to undeceive me with regard to it, and to precaution me against its seductions? Then what admonitions, what secret inspirations, what interior motions, and what remorse, had I, that I could not stifle! However I advanced in age, and God multiplied his mercies upon me. At one time he preserved my life from
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a dreadful accident which would have deprived me of it, and had given me up perhaps to eternal flames. Another time he stopt me by unexpected bad weather, when dragged on by my passions I was just ready to yield myself up to the deceitful charms of the world. Sometimes he mingled vexations and mortal griefs with my pleasures, to disengage me from them. And at other times he himself spoke interiourly to me, and urging me to give myself to him, he made my heart to understand all the tenderness and love his was sensible of towards me.

If I saw the companions of my pleasures fall about me, whom death snatched away by a precipitate end, it was thou, O Lord, that didst procure me that sight, to teach me not to depend on youth and life, and to offer early to thee a sacrifice of a blessing which thou couldst deprive me of, in the same manner as thou hadst done them. If I saw others more faithful to thy voice, forsaking the world to seek their salvation in holy retreat, thou hadst me in view in those triumphs of thy grace, and thou didst prepare their example for me, that I might be instructed and moved to repentance by it. If I found emptiness in my pleasures, weariness in companies, inconstancy in friends, perfidy in rivals, ingratitude in the masters I served, or obduracy in the protectors whose power I adored, it was still thou, O my God! who
strewed

strewn the way of perdition with thorns, in which I was insensibly engaging myself; and who acted thus to oblige me to return to thee, from whom I had departed without reflecting.

Shall I be able to enumerate all the interior motions of thy Holy Spirit, the secret admonitions of thy grace, the importunate remorses of my own conscience, the sweets and bitterneesses which thou didst manage so properly to disengage me from the world? But what then, O my saviour! have I not wearied thy patience, by having so often not known that most sweet and amiable voice which made itself be heard in my heart? Couldst thou not have withdrawn those helps, which thy liberal hand had so plentifully bestowed upon me? I had undoubtedly deserved it, and should still have reason to fear it, if I did not actually feel thy same goodness making itself known to my heart, which has so many times been rebellious to thee; and inviting it with an ineffable sweetness to return to its duty. If this heart be sometimes terrified with thy justice, I discover even in those fears an effect of thy mercy; since thy grace which forms those terrors in me, lets me feel them only to make me more vigilant and faithful.

Thus it is that every one of us ought to speak. I dare affirm there will not be any that

that shall read this, but who, in taking a review of their whole life, may discover therein some sensible marks of the predilection of God, and will be obliged to own, that they have received millions of singular favours, all which tended to bring about their conversion, and to procure their salvation more infallibly. Is it reasonable therefore, after so many marks to doubt still of the good will of God, and of his predilection? Is it possible not to discover, in his conduct over us, vocation added to choice, conversion of heart which has succeeded vocation, and protection added to both, which, as I have said, are at the same time, both the effect and the means of predestination, and which are consequently the comfortable marks of it. This is the path in which God has conducted his saints, thus it is that he has dealt with them. He deals with you now in the same manner; he has chosen you as he did them; he has sanctified you as he did them, and he will crown you as he has done them.

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SECTION XXIV.

The third mark of predestination: perseverance in good. New reasons to hope it: a proof of predestination drawn from the very temptation of discouragement.

THERE wants no more to complete the work of our salvation, than a perseverance of mercy on God's side, and a perseverance of fidelity in our own hearts; but this is also a matter of encouragement to us. Tho' we should never have an entire certainty upon this point, yet how many reasons have we to hope, and to conjecture with all possible probability that this merciful God will perfect the good work which he has begun in us. [Philip. ii.] That he will not abandon us to the frailty of our own inconstancy, and that he will support us unto the end, as he has protected us unto this day? For in fine, he has put us in the road, and has done it with infinite cares, and admirable helps. Perhaps he has wrought prodigies to put us in it; was it then to abandon us, and to destroy at present all the fruit of so many cares, and of so much vigilance? He has put us in the road, and into what road?

road? Into the same in which he put the saints who are now triumphant. How then should he have a design to destroy us in the same way, by which he conducted them to triumph and glory?

Ah what then! ought I to say to myself, if God had designed to reprobate and destroy me, would he have had towards me so much goodness, so much predilection, and so much patience? Why should he prevent me with so much care? Why should he urge me in so earnest a manner? Why should he expect me so long! Alas! having been a thousand times insulted by my crimes, and a thousand times provoked by my rebellions, he needed but to have let me crouched in them like so many others, or to have suffered me to perish in them, as I had like to have done so many times. He had done enough to shew his mercy, and to justify his justice in the punishment of me. If he has been pleased to do more, if he has been pleased to preserve me, to expect me, and to sollicite me, even to this day; it is only because, having chosen me by a particular goodness, he will also complete the work in me which his mercy had begun. *If God had intended to have put us to death, said the mother of Sampson heretofore, would he have received the sacrifice from our hands, which we have offered?* [Judg. I.] I have a right to speak like her, and to take from past mercies

mercies an assurance of mercies to come. If God, being provoked with my crimes, had been pleased to destine me to perish, would he have received the sacrifice which I have offered him of my whole self, in order to consecrate myself to his glory? I renew that universal sacrifice without any reserve or division, again at this day, and offer this holocaust of charity to him: it is he that gives me the thoughts of it, and the courage to do it; and it is he that forms in me that love which is the principle of it; shall it be more difficult for him to crown it with perseverance?

All those that shall read this will easily be able to draw these pious sentiments from it, and consequently may taste all the sweetness and joy which they inspire, even tho' that moment should be in regard of them the moment of their conversion, and the first of their consecration. By entering into the thoughts of the apostle *St. Paul*, those thoughts which are so comfortable and so proper to encourage both the penitent and the just, they may say to themselves for their own encouragement: alas! if God, being provoked with our crimes, had destined us to be the victims of his justice, would he have chosen us among a thousand others, to load us with so many benefits? Would he have taken so many precautions, in order to call us back from our wanderings? Would he have washed us so many times in the blood of Jesus

Christ?

Christ? No undoubtedly. Thus it is certain that *he has not destined us to be the objects of his wrath; but to acquire salvation thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*; and by granting us a share in the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, he puts the price of *that precious acquisition* into our hands. [1. Thes. v.] What can we desire more? Since that infinite price is sufficient to acquire grace, to acquire perseverance, and to acquire the crown of glory.

Thus it is that we ought to encourage ourselves in our diffidences. I dare engage that those who shall be willing to open their hearts to all these reflections, will find, as I have said, that predestination, which was their terror, will from henceforth be itself their consolation. For if it be afflicting to fear that one is not of the number of the elect; it is very consolatory to discover by so many marks, that one has reason to believe that he is comprehended in that happy number.

Let us compleat the proof of this truth, and let us draw from the very temptation which I am opposing, something to comfort those that it throws into trouble. Indeed, O fearful and desolate souls! whence springs that thought which terrifies you so much? Is it grace that inspires you with it; or is it not rather the devil that suggests it in you? Undoubtedly it is not grace; since grace rather carries you to hope, to confidence, and to love.

love. It is therefore the devil that is willing to seduce you. Why are you so credulous as to listen to that author of deceit? But why does he use so many endeavours to seduce you? It is because he knows the good will of God towards you, and it is in order to render it unprofitable, that he would willingly bring you into discouragement, and even, if it were possible for him, into despair. Certainly, if you were abandoned of God, if you were the object of his vengeance and his wrath, that tempter would not disturb you, neither would he endeavour to discourage you: for being assured of keeping you in his nets, he would only seek perhaps to amuse you in them by a deceitful calm. Thus it is that he is commonly very careful not to disturb those that are in libertinism, and given up to sensual pleasures: to them it is that he paints the mercy of God as always propitious, and the way of heaven as always easy. But who are they that he endeavours the ofteneft to trouble with frightful ideas of the justice of God? It is they who put a holy confidence in mercy, they whose conversion he is afraid of. It is to those that he commonly endeavours to exaggerate the justice of God, and his wrath, the difficulty of conversion, the rareness of perseverance, and the small number of the predestinate. He does this to induce them to abandon all thro' discouragement,

ment, and to deliver them up, if it were possible, to despair. Let those that are tempted in this manner by him, discover here the artifice of the devil; but let them discover at the same time in his wiles, the proof of the mercy of God upon them; since it is only that abundant mercy which draws upon them the persecutions of that wicked spirit, who seeing with indignation the happiness which expects them, he endeavours to deprive them of it.

SECTION XXV.

Who are they that have still more certain marks of their predestination? It is they that are in affliction.

HOW pressing soever these reflections may be, there are some christians that have more right than others to receive consolation from them; because they have a greater share in those particular marks of the predestination of God. As it often happens that they do not give sufficient attention to them, it is just to remind them of them in this place. It is they that are in grief, in oblivion, in aridity, in temptations, in infirmity, in poverty, in disgrace, or in any sort of pain and affliction whatsoever. Now it is a certain truth, that this is the true way of salvation, the particular lot of the chosen souls of God, and consequently the surest

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mark of predestination ; so that eternal salvation is as easy to the unhappy people of the world, as it is difficult to those who enjoy all the advantages of it.

Shall I undertake to prove a truth so certain and so often repeated in the holy Scriptures ? *The world shall rejoice*, said the Son of God to his disciples, *but ye shall have afflictions* : however, it is true *your affliction shall be changed into joy*. [John xvi. 20.] But you shall not taste the consolation which is in that joy, till you have felt what bitterness there is in affliction. *Blessed are they that suffer*, said Jesus Christ again ; *blessed are they that weep* ; *blessed are they that are persecuted* ; *because the kingdom of Heaven is for them*. [Matt. v.] Their right to that heavenly inheritance is acquired, and they shall not be deprived of it. The lot of the others is doubtful, and uncertain ; they have all the reason in the world to fear ; but as to those that suffer, their predestination, as one may say, is evident ; and the bounds of this predestination, which is heaven, belongs to them already. God could not, it seems, deprive them of it without injustice. Why so ? Because they are *the true children of God*, and it is to the children that the inheritance belongs. [Matt. v.]

But if the inheritance belong to the children, it also belongs to the children to suffer the chastisements and corrections of their father. *My son*, says the wise-man, *wilt thou be adopted*

adopted into the house of the Lord? Thou must prepare thy soul for temptation, how afflicting soever it be, [Eccles. 11.] Thou art agreeable to God, said the angel to Tobias, therefore it was necessarily requisite thou shouldst be put to the trial. [Tob. xii.] God receives the children of adoption, says St. Paul, but he receives none without correcting them; and if, continues that apostle, ye are not of the number of them that he afflicts, ye are not the children of the spouse, ye are the children of strangers, born in adultery, for whom the inheritance is not designed. [Hebr. xii. 7.]

Therefore you must pass thro' affliction and trials, to be assured that you are in the number of the children of God. But if you be in the number of those true children, of those children particularly cherished of God, can you doubt of your predestination and salvation; since what you suffer is the mark of it? An angel received an order from God to shew the prophet *Ezekiel*, who were the elect, that should avoid the chastisements of his fury in the holy city. That angel, to make them known to him, marked the forehead of every one of them with the salutary sign of their predestination. That mark was a *Hebrew* letter? and it is not unprofitable to observe with St. *Jerome*, and other commentators, that the same letter had the shape of a cross. But who were they

that were honoured with that precious mark? Was it the kings, the grandees of the world, the priests of the sanctuary, and the scrupulous observers of the law? No; election is not annexed to any state, but it is annexed to sufferings: *thou shalt mark*, says the Lord, *this sign upon the foreheads of those that are afflicted and suffer; that are in bitterness and lamentations.* [Ezech. vii.]

This is what another prophet explains still more clearly. He divides the world, represented by the holy people, into three parts; and the third part, which is that of the elect, is characterised only by afflictions. *And in all the earth, says the Lord, two parts shall be dispersed and shall fail; and the third part shall be left in it.* God disperses, he abandons the two parts to their iniquity, and to their obduracy; but in the third part he establishes the reign of his mercy: he makes them his people, and he will be their God. *They shall call me their God*, says he, *and I will call them my people; they shall invoke my name, and I will graciously hear them.* But how will this most good God deal with them; In this manner: *I will make them pass thro' the fire*, says he, *I will burn them as silver is burnt, and as gold is tried; in that manner I will try them.* [Ezech. xiii.] Thus it is that he deals with his well beloved. Indeed, he makes them pass thro', the fire of tribulation, and does not spare them;

them; some he subjects to the pain of infirmities; others to the fatigue of servitude; others to the trouble of scrupulosity; others to the malignity of calumniators; and others to the rigours of penance. He makes them pass thro' the fire, not as wood which is consumed by it; but as gold which is designed for some excellent work, and which is put into the crucible. That mettall in this state seems to suffer and be spoiled, it melts, is softened, and loses its strength and splendor: at length the time comes to take it from the fire; and it departs from thence only to be the astonishment and admiration of those that behold it. It is a precious and magnificent vessel, whose matter is pure, and the workmanship of it is wonderful. Such is the lot of the elect. Therefore it is not only expedient for them to suffer, but that is even their state and their portion: and consequently for this reason it is a precious mark of their predestination: and the sharper the sufferings are, the better ought the faithful soul to discover therein the solid grounds of its confidence. *Let us firmly believe, said a holy woman of the old testament to some afflicted people, let us believe that the chastisements we receive from God are only the effects of that mercy which corrects us, and not the effects of wrath which seeks to destroy us.* [Judith, viii.]

Let us examine further into the foundation of this truth, which is so proper to confound

the happy people of the world, that seek to taste all the pleasures of it; but at the same time so comfortable to those that open their eyes upon nothing but their losses, yet experience nothing but misfortunes, and feel nothing but bitterness and interior grief. Alas! they frequently do not know their own happiness: they call those pains misfortunes, scourges of God, and marks of his wrath; whilst they are to them the most sensible proofs of his mercy, since they are the signs of their predestination.

SECTION XXVI.

Proofs of the former truth. First, the most efficacious vocation is found in suffering:

ASK indeed, what it is that can contribute more efficaciously to our salvation? What it is that makes men saints and predestinate? It is first, as I have said before, the efficacious vocation of God, the expiation of sins committed, the precaution against relapses, and what includes all the rest, it is the resemblance of Jesus Christ. There certainly needs no more to make a saint, and to discern a predestinated person. Now where must we seek all these advantages? In sufferings. There you shall find them all: there-fore

fore in them you shall find the assurance of a happy predestination

First, in sufferings is found the efficacious vocation of God. It is true, God calls all christians, *wisdom*, says the Scripture, *lifts up its voice in the public places*; it invites every body indifferently to resort to it; but the greater part being drawn away by their earthly occupations, do not even hear its voice. [*Prov. 1.*] The father of a family invites all his neighbours to the nuptials of his son, and none of those that he had invited would come thither. One is rich, and employed amongst his goods; another sets his thoughts on becoming rich, and is making acquisitions; and a third is intent on enjoying the pleasures of life: all have their excuses, and none of them partake of the feast which was prepared for them. The father of a family provoked at their negligence and their contempt abandons them to their earthly occupations, which are their happiness, and which will terminate it; he transfers the favour he would have done them, to the poor, to the sick, to the miserable, that every body despises. These are they that enter in to the feast; but how do they enter in there? *A sort of violence was done them to make them enter in*; [*Luk, xiv.*] They were pressed, they were impelled, and were constrained, as one may say. What is this constraint, which the parable here speaks of in a figurative

manner? It is that of afflictions, which disengages a soul in some kind, against its own will, from the world which it loves, and obliges it to yield to the invitations of its God, that it despised, whilst it was happy. Thus the Son of God intending to prepare us for this application of his parable, has added thereto by way of conclusion; *there are many called, but few elect*: [Matt. xxii.] As if he had said, it is true, there are few chosen, and many called; but here you see who the one and the other are. The happy people of the world are called, and frequently are not chosen; but the unhappy, and the poor, are constrained, as one may say, to enter into the number of the elect.

This instructs us concerning the two means which God makes use of to draw us to him. There are some that he sweetly invites; there are others that he presses, that he throws down, that he chains, and that he forces by a kind of violence to yield unto him. This violence does not fall upon the will, for the will is always free, and is not necessitated by grace; but it falls upon what surrounds a person, upon the objects of his attachments, which God violently deprives him of, to oblige him to disengage himself from them. He deals with those souls that he designs to subject to him, as a prince deals with an enemy town that he intends to reduce to his obedience; he destroys its ramparts, demolishes
its

its bastions, weakens its defences, deprives it of all commerce with his enemies, oppresses it with hunger and repeated assaults, and obliges it sooner or later to surrender to him. Such is the second sort of vocation which God employs to call us.

Now it is easy to perceive which of the two vocations is the most pressing, and consequently the most efficacious. It is known, alas! that there are very few who yield to the sweet invitations of grace; and that for one who sincerely sacrifices the advantages of life, which he might enjoy at liberty, there are a thousand who come to that sacrifice only by the compulsion of afflictions. Yet how long is a rebellious heart to be contended with?

A person supports himself as long as he can upon every thing that surrounds him: he exhausts every human resource before he is willing to lay down his arms, and to own himself overcome: he acts as those passengers did, who being in the vessel that carried the prophet *Jonas*, and finding themselves in danger of perishing with him, *every one invoked his God*, the God that he knew, the God that he adored, the God that he loved.

[*Jonas*, 1.] In this manner we act when our God afflicts us in order to bring us back to him. There are other Gods which our hearts adore, and to which they have recourse: those Gods are riches, the fortunes

of parents, our protectors, and our own ability, upon which we always depend. Those are the Gods in which we place our first confidence, and to which we say, *deliver me, save me.* [Isai. xlv.] But those Gods are impotent; we soon discover their weakness, and when we are plunged in a bitterness from which no human assistance can withdraw us, we have recourse at length to God, we invoke him, we acknowledge his justice, we submit to his will in all things, and we are as it were constrained to take this part, because we no longer have any other resource to fly to for comfort in our troubles.

How many are there that will discover by their own experience, the truth of what I here advance, and will with justice acknowledge, that if God had not disengaged them from the world by afflictions; if he had not spread salutary bitterness over the objects of their passion; if he had not strewed the way of ambition, or that of pleasures, with thorns, to give them a disgust of them, they should have preserved to the end those criminal attachments by which they were retained? How many are there that begun to be christians, only when they begun to be afflicted; that opened their eyes to the truths of faith, only when they opened them to the misfortunes with which they were surrounded; and that bestowed their tears on penance, only

only after they had shed them over their losses, their afflictions, and their infirmities? How many are there that would never have thought on receiving the true sentiments of christian humility, without the disgrace of a prince, or the ruin of their own fortune? Amused with a vain phantom of devotion, they fed their own self-love with all the appearances of good-works, of which they made a trophy. They imagined they were just and faithful, and applauded themselves for their pretended sanctity: yet they were more distant from God by their pride, than others would have been by their crimes. The time of their conversion is come, and also that of their salvation: for God has made them hear his voice in an efficacious manner; and how? They have been humbled by notable disgraces; and humility, so necessary to salvation, has entered into their hearts by the door of humiliation.

How many others are there that God treats in the same manner, and who would spend their whole life in pleasure, joy, and plenty, if God did not call them to him, by snatching out of their hands those objects of their desires? To one he sends a painful and dangerous sickness, and to another a loss of goods: one man has ruined his health, and therefore he can no longer go into company; another has lost his protector, and all his hopes have been buried with him;

another discredited in his business by the misfortune of the times, is forced to quit it. Sometimes death deprives a person of his parents, friends, wife, or children; and he no longer finds any consolation on earth; there is nothing but God that shews himself to that afflicted heart, to offer him a solid consolation in his love. This man discovers at last that God is his true friend, his friend at all times, his friend that never ceases to be so. Behold what passes every day, and perhaps the reader will discover this by his own experience. This is what I call an efficacious vocation, because it generally has its effect; and this vocation is the first step that must be taken, to enter into the path of predestination, and is the first mark of it.

SECTION XXVII.

The second proof: the most certain expiation of sin is found in sufferings. The advantage of involuntary afflictions above voluntary penances.

WHAT I have said of vocation, I say the same of the expiation of sin, and of the precaution that must be taken to commit it no more: both the one and the other, which are known to be essentially necessary to

to falvation, are commonly found only in afflictions and sufferings.

As to what concerns the expiation of fin, who is it that, without the involuntary misfortunes of life, as sicknesses, accidents, griefs, contradictions, pains, and losses, would ever think of expiating so many crimes formerly committed, and so many daily faults, which are renewed at every moment? And yet we know there is no falvation without penance; *unless ye do penance, ye shall all perish in like manner*; [Luk. xiii. 3.] But we cannot resolve to do it; or if we do it, the manner of it is so mild and so negligent, that it cannot be of any great merit. A person would live in that state, and because he was unwilling to do penance, he would find himself perhaps condemned to do the fruitless penance of devils eternally in the flames of hell; if our merciful God himself did not provide some means to draw from us a satisfaction which his justice requires, and which our timidity refuses him.

This ought to encourage those who in their affliction are afraid that the penance, which it occasions them to do, should not be agreeable to God, because it is not voluntary. This is an error; and I can assure those that have this fear, that the pains which God imposes on them, are as proper to expiate their iniquities in a holy manner, as the

the most austere macerations of the flesh which they could impose upon themselves by their own choice. I even believe, that in one sense, they are more proper to appease the wrath and justice of God. For in the first place, these afflictions certainly bear the character of the will of God upon us ; since nothing happens to us without a salutary disposition of his divine providence : a character which voluntary macerations have not always, which are regulated as often by caprice as by devotion.

Secondly, they are often more rigorous, and consequently a more proper satisfaction for our sins. For what a difference is there between the fastings, disciplines, and hair-cloth of a solitary ; and the acute pains of an inveterate sickness ; the perpetual contradictions of a husband, or a master, whose whimsies are to be undergone every moment ; the extremities to which poverty reduces ; and the trouble and humiliation which are frequently occasioned by the loss of reputation, and the ruin of fortune.

Thirdly, they are more humbling, and more proper to induce a man to an entire renunciation of himself. Oftentimes the self-love which is found in the choice of voluntary austerities, the vanity which is inspired by them, the praises which they obtain, corrupt all the merit of them. But those involuntary

voluntary crosses, which the providence of God has procured us for our salvation, have no such thing in them. The world can have no esteem for those pains: there is nothing brilliant in those misfortunes, nothing that gains applause, or is satisfactory to self-love. On the contrary, self-love is entirely buried under the ruins of fortune, of health, or of reputation: he that has fallen at present into those disgraces, is very sensible that he finds nothing in them to boast of. Thus does God, by involuntary misfortunes, prepare for his predestinate a more efficacious and securer means to expiate their sins; but it is no less true, that he offers them, by the same means, as efficacious a precaution against sin.

SECTION XXVIII.

The third proof: the surest precaution against sin, is found in affliction.

WHAT indeed is the most common source of sin? It is abundance and pleasure, power and glory. It is these that beget sensuality, vanity, malignity, contempt of men, forgetfulness of God, and even frequently annihilation of the faith. What means more certain to precaution one's self against

against those wanderings, than affliction? There are two sensible reasons for this: the one is, because afflictions teach us to fear the power and justice of him, who when he pleases, overthrows our projects, our power, and our pride; and sooner or later avenges the contempt of his law. And the other, because the proper effect of the losses and salutary afflictions which God prepares for us, is to separate us from those objects which formed our attachments, and occasioned the irregularity of our heart.

I also appeal for this to the testimony of those who may read this writing, and shall perhaps be in that state of affliction, which I praise the advantages of. If they do justice to themselves, they will confess that they begun to leave off sinning, only when God laid his hand heavily upon them, to deprive them of the occasions of it, and in his wrath to break those terrestrial idols, which shared in the adorations of their hearts: so that if he should restore the same riches or pleasures to them, which he has deprived them of, they would abandon themselves again perhaps to the same passions as before; because they would have the same facility to satisfy them.

You are afflicted because your infirmities have not an end: you drag on a languishing life by means of remedies: you are become unprofitable to the world, and company no longer

longer invites you. If your health were perfect, you would make one as formerly in all the pleasures of the court, or of the city: balls, shows, gamings, and companies, would enjoy your presence again as heretofore: you would seek as you did then, to lose your time in those criminal amusements; the world would not be without you, neither could you be without the world; the charms of your attractives, which your languishing disorder has perhaps defaced, would fetter again the hearts of your adorers, and would chain you with them in iniquity.

You are grieved because fortune which is so favourable to others, has had nothing for you but repulses. Alas! if it had smiled on you, as it does on them, it would have intoxicated you as it has done them: like them you would have forgotten in your elevation a God that pride does not know, and that is served only in humility: like others you would have been arrogant and proud, haughty and disdainful, unjust in your pretensions, cruel in your vengeance, negligent in your duties, as most part of the great are, whose fortune you envy.

You are chagrined because you are in poverty; but if you were rich, would you be more holy? On the contrary, would you not be more sensual, and more vain in your expences; since you desire those riches which you have not, only to procure yourself vanities,

ties, conveniences, and pleasures, which poverty refuses you.

Therefore it is an advantage to you, to be sick, to be poor, and to be in disgrace with fortune ; since those miseries have drawn you from a state which is for all others a near occasion of falling, and which perhaps was also such for you formerly. Now what more certain mark is there of the merciful design which God has formed to save you from the common perdition, than to see him take the most efficacious methods for removing the occasions thereof ? Can you doubt after this that he will not save you, nor comprehend you in the number of those that he has chosen for heaven ? It is not thus that he deals with those whose obduracy obliges him to reprobate them : he lets them run according to the bent of their own desires, and as *St. Cyprian* says, he leaves those dreadful victims of his wrath to fatten themselves at leisure with the riches of the world, that he may immolate them afterwards with more glory to his vengeance. But as to those whom he has predestinated, he suffers them not to stray from the way of salvation, without punishing them ; and if they have departed from it, he brings them back again to it by affliction. Thus it was that he dealt with all those that were before you the object of his most precious favours : if he deals with you at present as he did with them ; it is
a sign

a sign that he cherishes you as he did them ; and that he will conduct you by the same trials to the same crown.

SECTION XXIX.

The fourth and last proof. Afflictions form a resemblance in us with Jesus Christ. This resemblance compleats predestination.

LET us complete the proof of this truth with the last character of predestination ; or rather with the only character of predestination ; since it includes all the others : we shall happily find this beautiful character in those persons whom God afflicts. What is this character ? I have mentioned it, and it is sufficiently known ; it is a resemblance with Jesus Christ : *those whom God has chosen, says the apostle, he has predestinated them to be conformable to Jesus his son, and to bear in themselves the happy resemblance of that well-beloved son, who was on earth a man of sorrows, who experienced all our miseries, and was loaded with reproaches. [Rom. viii.]*

God created man, says *Tertullian*, to the image of his Son. He had then an idea of the nature which that son was to take when he came upon earth, and he was pleased that this son should be the model according to which

which he created the first man. Such is the thought of that father; and whatever this thought be, it may be said, that God has still more certainly the same design in the sanctification of man, which the holiness of Jesus Christ is the model of; so that, if man be destined to participate in the state of glory of the Son of God in heaven, he is destined first to participate in the state of his sufferings on earth. He is obliged to carry his cross with him, to carry it as he did, and to consummate, in the union of his death, upon that cross the sacrifice which he expects from his fidelity. *If any one will come after me, says that well beloved Son, let him deny himself, let him carry his cross, let him carry it daily, and let him follow me.* [Luk. ix. 23.]

I shall not dwell to prove the indispensable necessity which is imposed on us, to fulfil this obligation, and to form this holy conformity in ourselves. No body is ignorant of this; but I would have people more sensible of that consolation, which it is to produce in the heart of him in whom misfortunes and poverty, sufferings, or persecutions, have begun to form so happy a resemblance.

For in fine, when conformity with Jesus Christ bears in itself a close connection with predestination; when predestination cannot be without this conformity; and when this conformity is the surest means to lead to predestination;

destination; what ought he to think whom God himself takes care, by salutary afflictions, to render like his son? What ought he to think to whom he imparts a share of that chalice of bitterness, which that well-beloved son drank for us *even to the dregs*, and which he nailed, as one may say, with him to the cross? Ought he to resist, to be afflicted, and to complain? No certainly. But what then! ought he to be disturbed about his salvation, and about his predestination; to be in trouble for fear he should not be in the good way, and to listen to the tempter, when he suggests to him, that mercy is no longer designed for him? Alas! he needs but to yield himself up to the conduct of his God, and acquiesce to his will in all things; he needs but to let him act, as one may say, and to rely upon him: for since this God of goodness has begun to put him in the way of salvation, he will know how to preserve him and support him in it. Then that man exceeding happy in resembling Jesus Christ in some manner, so far from being afflicted with what men call the scourges of God, ought to find in what he suffers, the very consolation of his pain. He ought to say with the prophet: *O Lord, the rod of thy justice, and the staff of thy wrath, have been my consolation.* [Psa. xxii.]

Let worldly people be afflicted with thy chastisements, let them desire to avert them,
let

let them seek for frivolous consolations amongst creatures and the amusements of the world, and let them address their vows to thee in order to obtain a deliverance from those salutary pains: for my own part, O my God! I have but one prayer to make to thee, and but one single desire. I wish to carry the amiable cross of my saviour, to carry it like him, to be fastened to it with him, and even to die upon it with him. This cross shall stand me in stead of every thing, and tho' all earthly consolations should have abandoned me, this cross itself shall be my consolation. With it I will neither fear temptations, nor the tempter, nor all hell itself in arms to destroy me. Possessing that precious pledge of my predestination, I will no longer give myself up to those fearful alarms, into which my diffidence has thrown me hitherto; and putting all my confidence in that precious treasure, afflictions from henceforth shall be to my eyes the consolatory signs of thy choice; and the manner in which I will suffer them, shall be to thy eyes a shining proof of my love.

SECTION XXX.

A recapitulation. or an abridgment of all that is contained in this work.

I Hope that afflicted persons, of what nature soever their afflictions be, will find matter in these sentiments to comfort themselves in their pains, and to alleviate all the bitterness of them. I hope likewise, that those who are thrown into trouble and dejection by an excessive fear, will find in all the reflections of this book enough to calm their alarms. It is in favour of them, that I think it proper before I finish, to make a recapitulation of all that is contained in the course of this treatise; that those who shall read it may see at once, and as it were with the cast of an eye, the number and force of the proofs I have employed, the order and fitness of the answers I have made to the objections suggested to them by temptation; so that the one and the other together may make a stronger impresson upon the mind.

Altho' there be a salutary fear which ought never to depart from the heart of the just, yet there is a fear whose excess is to be apprehended, and whose effects are dreadful. Those effects are discouragement and grief; but chiefly a weakening of tenderness in the love we ought to have of God. It is that tenderness

tenderneſs which God expects from us, and which he ſhows us the model of, in the tenderneſs with which he himſelf loves us. It is that tenderneſs which the timid and diffident man does not enjoy, and which is commonly found only in a lively confidence in the goodneſs of our Saviour; this is the confidence which I have intended to inſpire.

Nothing is more ſolid than this confidence; ſince it is eſtabliſhed upon the power of God, upon the truth of God, and what is ſtill more proper to excite it in us, upon ſo incomprehenſible a goodneſs and mercy, that the multitude of our crimes has not repulſed them, neither has the extent of his infinite benefits exhausted them.

But if this confidence be ſolid, it ſeems to be no leſs indiſpenſible. The advantages we find in it ſhould ſuffice to oblige us to yield to the ſweet ſentiments of it; ſince this confidence honours God in a nobler and more glorious manner; and ſince we find in it joy and reſt of heart, the fervour of charity, fortitude in temptations, comfort in our pains, and conſequently a powerful reſource for our ſalvation.

In vain does the too fearful ſoul ſuffer itſelf to be frightened to exceſs, by the ſeverity of the judgements of God; ſince that God of goodneſs is ſtill more amiable to us than he is terrible; and ſince it is even, it ſeems, to
favour

favour us, that he remits our judgment into the hands of Jesus Christ his Son, made man like us; and on that account he is full of goodness, humanity, and compassion, towards those, whose brother, spouse, and friend, he was pleased to become; and whose infirmities and weakness he vouchsafed to experience. Why should we not hope for a favourable judgment, from a Judge that is so compassionate towards his brethren, and so tender towards his friends; and who even seems to be interested by his own glory, as much as by his tenderness, in the favourable success of that judgment? But what reason have we to be terrified, when this Judge is pleased at the same time to be both our advocate and intercessor; and when, to supply the want of merit in us, he is pleased to cover our misery with all his own merits, and to give us, by his blood, a right to exact of God his Father, by a kind of justice, that mercy which we hope to receive from him.

If that terrified soul will still nourish his diffidences with the sight of his crimes or imperfections, he may also find, on that part, matter for his encouragement, when he sees the sentiments of goodness which God shews, not only towards the just, but particularly towards sinners; since he loves them, and even loves them tho' sinners as they be; since in that state he looks upon them not only with compassion, but even with tenderness; since

he calls them, seeks them, expects them, and receives them as the father of the family in the gospel received the prodigal child, without requiring of them any other price of the pardon he immediately grants them, than sorrow, confidence and love; since he even prevents them to form and excite these sentiments in them; and since all is tender and amiable in this God of goodness, even to his very reproaches, his chastisements, and his menaces.

This is what ought to calm the diffidences of that fearful soul, and what ought to open his heart to the sweet sentiments of a tender confidence in our Saviour. After this there is no more than one subject of terror to him, and that is the small number of the elect; but he may also find enough to encourage himself against the terrors of so frightful a truth. How terrifying soever it be in itself, it is no longer so to the just soul, that has reason to believe that he is of that small and happy number, that discovers the marks of it, and sees that God, being most merciful towards him, favours him with those particular and personal gifts, which he chiefly grants to those whom he loves with a singular love; and that he has conducted him along the same paths, which he has prepared for those among his elect, that are already crowned.

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This is what those just or penitent souls may discover, whom the grace of God draws to him ; and whom the devil endeavours to disturb by unreasonable fears, to detain them thereby in the bonds of sin, or to force them again into them ; but this will still be more clearly discovered by those whom God has made partakers of the cross of his Son, who spend their lives in bitterness and affliction, from what quarter soever they come, and of what nature soever they be. With regard to these, predestination is not only probable, but it even seems to be almost certain ; since they find in this state, the most efficacious vocation, the most entire expiation of their past faults, and the most infallible precaution against sin ; and consequently the most certain perseverance.

SECTION XXXI.

The conclusion of this work. We must confide in God for our earthly goods ; we must likewise confide in him for our predestination and salvation.

LET us conclude this whole treatise with one reflection, which confirming all that we have said concerning the marks of predestination, may equally confirm whatever we have established in this work touch-

ing the effect, which confidence in the mercy of God ought to produce in us. It is sufficiently granted that we must confide in the providence of God for all our temporal necessities, for our health, our fortune, and our life; that this confidence must banish troubles and inquietudes, which are frequently experienced by people attached to the goods of this world; and though we ought not to tempt God, nor abandon the care of our temporal affairs, under a pretext of confidence; yet we know that we must rely upon that universal providence, *which takes care to furnish those with nourishment who confide in it.* [Pf. liv. 25.] We confess that the more peaceable this confidence is, the more pure is our christianity, and the more perfect is our virtue. Shall it be only our salvation for which we should not put all our confidence in God? Is it therefore because he will have less sollicitude to save us, than to nourish us; and shall we pardon ourselves those diffidences upon this point, which we would not dare to permit ourselves upon the necessities of our lives?

It is true that all the earth is his, that he holds all our riches in his hands, and that he is the master of our health and of our life. *He is the God of life and death*, says the Scripture; but is he not also called, *the God of our salvation*; that is to say, he that desires our salvation, that labours in our salvation, and will

will make the affair of our salvation succeed ?
[Ps. xxxvii.] Why then shall we not say of
our eternal salvation, in which, I dare say,
our God is more interested than we, what
we would confidently say of the temporal
helps which we expect from him ?

*The Lord is my guide, nothing shall be want-
ing to me, he has established me in the midst of
plenty.*

*He has placed me near a salutary water ; he
has brought back my soul from its wanderings.*

*He has conducted me thro' the paths of justice,
for the glory of his name.*

*Though after this I should walk in the midst of
the shadows of death, no evils shall terrify me, O
Lord, because thou art with me.*

*Thy very rod, and the staff of thy wrath, are
my whole consolation.*

*Thou hast set before me a table prepared, to
fortify me against those that afflict me.*

*Thou hast anointed my head with a most sweet
unction ; and how bitter soever thy chalice may
seem, I find it admirable.*

*Therefore thy mercy, O Lord, shall support
me all the days of my life.*

*It shall give me an entrance into thy heavenly
habitation, to dwell there for all eternity. [Ps. xxii.]*

17-1-1952

There have been a table prepared to

THE HAPPINESS

OF A CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

A
T R E A T I S E
O F T H E
F A L S E H A P P I N E S S
O F W O R L D L Y P E O P L E ,
A N D O F T H E
T R U E H A P P I N E S S
O F A C H R I S T I A N L I F E .

Written in French by the same Author.

THE HISTORY OF THE

OF WOLFE

THE HISTORY OF THE



A Treatise of the false Happiness of
worldly people, and of the true Happiness of a christian Life.

*To Madam the Marchioness of * * **

MAdam, you have said enough to me about that affair, and perhaps more than you have imagined. I am sensible of all the inquietudes which disturb you, and believe I have penetrated into the cause of them; which you are seemingly ignorant of yourself. Every thing that is most brilliant in the world surrounds you, and presents to your eyes the most seducing sights. No widow had ever less to desire from the side of birth, or that of fortune: the one gains you homages, and the other secures to you all the pleasures which a person of your age has an avidity for. To these frivolous advantages, nature has added every thing that can procure you dreadful happiness; your air, your behaviour, your agreeable conversation, your delicate mind, and whatever you possess, gains you the respects of those that you know, and the anxieties of those you are not yet acquainted with. You please, and perhaps you

please but too much; and pride, which is so active in persons of your age, and so delicate in a woman that is sensible of the talents of her own mind, finds in you but too much matter wherewith to nourish and fortify itself.

You see it is not to applaud those frivolous advantages, that I draw a picture of them. This is not an incense that I pretend to offer to your vanity, but a lesson which I think I owe to your christianity: far from admiring so many accomplishments, they make me tremble for you, and as much perhaps as you are in love with them. You please the world, and the world, alas! equally pleases you; or at least you are pleased with the world. In spite of that fund of religion which God has preserved in you, you bear a little love to this world, of which it is written: *Take heed not to love the world, nor all that it contains; for he that loves it has no charity in him.* [1 John ii. 15.]

But whilst the world presents to your senses, whatever is most attractive in it; whilst your state, your riches, your independance, your liberty, and a thousand other advantages, are the admiration, or envy of every body; I know not what disgust has seized your soul, and introduced a grief sometimes therein, which was hitherto unknown to us. In the midst of shews and pleasures, your heart scarce finds any thing that possesses it, or in which

which it has any concern. That gaiety which was so natural to you, is sometimes in your regard, as a strange passion which is unknown to you, or which you have but a slight remembrance of : it gives place to a real weariness, which pursues you even into the most amusing companies ; or if sometimes your heart enjoys some pleasures, a more durable chagrin succeeding that transitory joy, effaces even the very ideas of them ; and being master of your heart, it exercises a dominion therein, which seems to you both new and insupportable. This, Madam, is what you are sensible of, what you have almost acknowledged to me, and what you cannot conceal from yourself ; but this is what you have not yet perhaps discerned, or what you have but had a glimpse of through the darkness with which your heart is enveloped.

God alone is the author of those griefs and displeasures : yes, it is he alone that diffuses over your amusements those disgusts which seem new to you ; he takes away from the pleasures of the world, the seducing veil which hid them from your sight, to let you know them such as they are in their own nature, and to make you confess that every thing in them is frivolous, vain, and frail ; and incapable of satisfying a soul that is made only for him, and cannot be contented but by possessing him. Thus, says St. *Augustin*, does he diffuse salutary bitterness over those concupiscen-

cupiscences which chain our hearts, in order to disengage them the more efficaciously from them, when he is pleased to make an idol of the world a victim of his love, and a conquest of his grace.

Discern still more certainly those merciful operations of your God, in the trouble which agitates your heart, and which is joined to the displeasure which the world occasions you. You are far from possessing your soul in peace: just remorse upon the inutility of your life, and holy terrors upon the judgments of God, too often alarm your conscience: the grace of God which you resist, whilst it urges you, makes you bear, by urging you without ceasing, the just pain of your resistances.

Nevertheless you still resist it, and it is easy to penetrate into the reason of it. Devotion terrifies you; it seems as grievous to you as the displeasure you are in: piety and penance deject you: all the consolations and sweetness they promise you appear chimerical to you; and if you begin to be disgusted with the world, because you know it; you are no less disgusted with devotion, because you know it not.

Ought I not to endeavour to undeceive you upon so false and dreadful a prevention? Your confidence gives me a right to do it, and the interest I take in what regards you, lays an obligation upon me to unvail such truths to you, without disguise, as will be salutary

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lutory to you. Yes, Madam, were you to be instantly provoked at my boldness, yet I will tell you, that God requires from you the sacrifice of that remains of inclination which attaches you to the world, and of those repugnances which you have to piety and retreat: to this twofold sacrifice it is that he has annexed that rest and peace, which you no longer find on earth. You will never obtain a tranquil happiness, peace, and contentment, whilst you resist the voice of God which calls you; and whilst his mercy, which is armed against your resistances, shall pursue you without ceasing; he will neither suffer division, nor delay. Perhaps to interior solicitations he will even join temporal misfortunes, which will know very well how to abstract you from the world, which you are unable to forsake; and you will not begin to taste peace and rest, till wearied with shedding unprofitable tears over your chains, you shall have taken a generous resolution to break them entirely.

But what then, you will say, will he require of me an entire separation from the society of the world? Would he have me even to consecrate my liberty to the confines of a cloister? No, Madam, I dare not yet say whether God requires that of you; but though he should require it, alas! who are you to resist him? Is the cloister, a religious life, and solitude, such terrifying states? And how many souls
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are there even at this time, who being undeceived of the world which has seduced you, find real delights therein, such as you are ignorant of, and which they themselves do not conceive? It is therefore to undeceive you upon the false ideas which tie you to the world, and to teach you to form to yourself more just ideas of christian piety, that I address this little memorial to you. I will even confine myself to follow that idea which furnished the matter of our last conversation; *viz.* that happiness of life is not to be found in the enjoyment of the world; that this happiness can only be found in true piety, and in the service of God; and that whatever is most austere in a penitent life, though it were even that of a cloister and of religion, is no obstacle to this true happiness.

May God vouchsafe to give unction and force to this writing, and docility to your heart: *To day if ye shall hear the voice of your God, harden not your hearts.* [Pf. xciv. 8.]

Man being subject to so many pains upon earth, has no need of being taught that he is to sigh after felicity. It is from a lively sense of his very misery, that this solicitude, which is so natural and so general, arises in him, of seeking incessantly after a happiness which he finds the necessity of, but whose nature and source he does not yet know. This solicitude is just, is reasonable, and is even a gift of God: but behold where the

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wandering of man begins. Being too well instructed not to know that he is unhappy, he is at the same time too blind to see of himself the knowledge of what may terminate his misery. In this blindness he stops by chance at every thing that presents itself to him under a vain phantom of felicity: riches, honours, preeminence, health, pleasure, joy, sloth, play, and negligence, all suffice to amuse his unresolved and blinded heart. I represent him to myself as a traveller that walks in the dark, and knows not the road he is to keep in: he resigns himself to the first path that he finds under his feet, and meets with nothing by following it but new mistakes, and perhaps precipices. Hence proceeds avidity to gain, avarice to heap up wealth, violence to usurp, intemperance to enjoy all pleasures, and in general all the excesses which a heart is capable of, that abandons itself to the bent of its own desires; because being deceived by the false glittering of a transitory contentment, he foolishly thought to find that true happiness, for which he had so great an avidity, in the goods of the earth.

However there are some, who better enlightened than others, have known the vanity of those earthly goods; and who taking a new road to arrive at felicity, were willing to teach men by their example, to seek it, not in sensible things, but in virtue, wisdom,
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and philosophy. This was a great deal for blind people ; but it was not enough to bring them out of their darkness : they had another step to take to find the light and the truth. This step so necessary, was to depart not only from sensible goods, to seek that fugitive felicity which cannot be found in them ; but also to depart out of themselves, to seek it only in God alone. Alas ! can their too weak reason raise itself so high ? They have confined themselves to place their whole happiness in themselves ; and in themselves they find a thousand new sources of misery, which their pretended wisdom does not assuage the bitterness of. *What a folly, said St. Augustin upon this subject, what a folly is it for a mortal man, who during so short a life, groans under the weight of so many miseries, weaknesses, and ignorances, to rely upon himself in order to find felicity therein.* Pride alone might make him hope to do it ; but could pride render a man happy ; since it was pride itself that made him lose his pristine happiness ?

Now what the senses could not discover, what philosophy could not unfold, and what the most enlightened reason itself has at most but given a glimpse of, christianity shews clearly to us. It is in the gospel, in its maxims, in its truths, and in its counsels, that we find the true way which leads to a solid happiness. It is the Gospel which teaches us that true felicity is only to be found

found in the possession of God; that this happy possession, which the just taste the first fruits of here below, by that charity which unites them to God, shall only be completed in heaven; that in expecting this happy completion, we may experience upon earth a sort of happiness, such as miserable men can enjoy; and lastly, that this felicity neither consists in what is sensible, in what is perishable, nor in what satisfies self-love, in pride and pleasures; that on the contrary, it is only to be found in the victory over the passions, the humiliation of pride, the destruction of self-love, and the contempt of all perishable things.

Such are the sublime lights which we are indebted for to Jesus Christ. That is the treasure which was hidden in the obscurity of ages, and which he has revealed to us in his mercy. You are too well instructed, Madam, to be ignorant of these great truths, and too faithful not to believe them; but what impression can these articles of our faith make upon the hearts of worldly people, which they know, as one may say, but in a summary manner, and which they believe only with a dull or languishing faith? Let us endeavour to explicate them here in a more sensible and more interesting a manner. This I shall do by establishing four truths, the proof of which I intend to carry even to a demonstration.

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The first truth. If we have any happiness to enjoy upon earth, I can find it only in the peace of the soul, the tranquility of the mind, and the contentment of the heart.

The second truth. The world does not give, and will never give, this contentment and peace of heart, were it to multiply its pretended joys and pleasures to an infinity.

The third truth. Piety, virtue, and religion, alone can procure us this solid contentment of heart, which the world promises in vain.

The fourth truth. All that seems to be painful in piety and virtue, does not destroy this peace and contentment of heart; and what is most mortifying and most austere in the cloister itself and in a religious state, cannot bring any obstacle to its true happiness. Acknowledge, Madam, that if I establish these four truths in a solid manner, your resistances will have no further pretences.

The first truth. The first of these truths ought to have already prevented you by its own evidence. It belongs to our soul alone to decide upon felicity; but our heart ought to be the judge of it. The heart is the seat of all the sentiments which are formed by the happiness or misery of man. Inquietude, grief, indignation, fear, and despair; these are the things which make the whole man unhappy. In order to transfer himself from this state of misery to that of felicity, he must restore

restore to his heart peace, satisfaction, contentment, and delights, which those cruel passions had deprived it of.

No, it is neither poverty, loss of goods, forgetfulness of men, nor disgraces, which make people unhappy upon earth: it is only the trouble and indignation which these miseries throw into a passionate heart, that is provoked at its losses, and despairs in its sorrows. Collect all these afflictions upon the head of a man, that is sufficiently virtuous to possess his soul in peace in the midst of these evils, and courageous enough to despise all these pretended advantages, the loss of which makes us lament; but leave patience and consolation in his heart, you will make him a suffering man, but you will not make him an unhappy man.

Poverty, and a deprivation of the pleasures and conveniences of life, according to your sense is a great evil; yet how many poor people, I do not speak of those poor by choice that have sacrificed their riches to Jesus Christ; but even of those the sight of whom excites your pity, who in their miseries are less unhappy than you? They are neither troubled, uneasy, nor scarce sensible to the privation of those goods, whose possession seems to you so essential to felicity.

Abjection, humiliation, and contempt of the world, according to you, is a great evil; but what evil is it to him that relishes nothing but

but retreat and silence, that loves to be unknown and forgotten; were there even nothing but humour and caprice in his choice?

Death, according to your notion, is the most terrible of all evils. Alas! are there not some people to whom it is the object of their sighs, and the time of their consolation; in a word, that desire it, either through virtue, or despair?

On the contrary, you say, it is a great happiness to be rich, to be powerful, to be honoured, and to enjoy a perfect health. Unite all these advantages together, which fortune so rarely bestows upon one person; and add likewise to them, all the sensual pleasures and delights that can complete this pretended felicity; but leave in the soul of that happy mortal, an uneasy desire of obtaining some other good, which he thinks is wanting to him; leave in his heart trouble, agitation, fear, or indignation; and one of these passions alone will be sufficient to disconcert all that apparent happiness. That happy mortal will find life insupportable: he will be agitated, will give sighs, will fatigue every body with his complaints, and will abandon himself perhaps to despair. Why so? because it is not what surrounds us that causes our happiness. What is about us does but affect our body and senses; but our soul is the principal part of ourselves; there-

therefore the chief portion of our felicity ought to reside in our soul.

I say moreover, that to be happy we must not only be so in the heart; but we must be happy, (if I may presume to express myself thus) in the whole heart, in the whole extent of the heart: and this is what I have already insinuated, by saying that one single passion is sufficient to disconcert the most perfect happiness. If all the passions be in peace, and that in examining the heart with regard to all these, we find it content, peace shall be its happiness; but he cannot avoid being unhappy, if one of these passions in its fury, lacerates him with its desires and inquietudes. Thus the proud *Haman* experienced this in the midst of the most splendid fortune. The sight alone of an enemy whom he had so much reason to despise, disconcerted his happiness: he said to his friends, the confidants of that trouble with which his soul was agitated: no, I shall never be content, whilst that man shall appear in my sight. I account my riches, my power, and the favour of *Affuerus*, as nothing: the sight of that slave offends me more than all the benefits I enjoy can satisfy me. Is this all? No; to make a man happy, the happiness which fills his whole heart, must also possess it in a durable and solid manner; so that this heart being peaceable in its rest, lie not at the mercy of the inconstances of chance, and
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the vicissitudes of life. What is a happiness that amuses to day, and to morrow shall be changed into a real desolation? What is a flower that flourishes in the morning, and in the evening falls into decay? The senses may employ themselves with it for a moment. A wanton joy, an immoderate laughter, and superficial delights, will for some hours inebriate a heart which willingly gives itself up to them; but what a condition will he find himself in, when the enchantment shall end, when all those phantoms of pleasure shall escape from his hands, and when nothing remains with him but a faint remembrance of them? What! is that very moment of pleasure and rest, a real pleasure and rest, when a person is in fear of losing it, or rather in a certainty that this so delightful a moment is drawing to its end?

Therefore it were requisite that this contentment of heart, in order to be solid, should either fix the inconstances of chance, or be proof against its own vicissitudes. I shall finish the drawing a character of it, by adding, that it were requisite also that it should be proof against death itself; and that this enemy of the happiness of mortals should never be able to trouble it. For who can flatter himself with being happy, when he knows that very soon he is to experience the strangest of all miseries? That the more delights he shall have tasted, the more riches and

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possessions he shall enjoy, and the more regret he shall have to leave them. That man who reaps such great advantages from all the goods of fortune, is forced to say to himself in the midst of all his happiness: there will be a time, and that time approaches, when all my felicity will cause my despair: for the more complete my felicity shall have been, and the greater shall my affliction be to lose it without resource. Who is the man that can be happy with such an expectation? Unhappy then is the man that is forced to think thus; but more unhappy still if his intoxication hinders him from thinking in this manner!

Such, Madam, is the idea we must form to ourselves of true happiness, not only according to the maxims of christianity, but even according to the principles of reason. I say nothing but what philosophy is forced to acknowledge: for every other idea would be deceitful. Let us now see if this felicity can be found in the society of the world, in its riches, in its delights, in its diversions, or in its honours. Let us see if all that composes its amusements, or its occupations, can procure the contentment of the heart, the contentment of the whole heart, a solid and durable contentment, and a contentment which is proof against death, or even if it can agree with it.

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The second truth. Let us first examine what those goods are, which may be truly called the goods and advantages of the world; goods in such a manner proper to worldlings and to the people of the world, as to make a difference between their state and that of the saints, penitents, solitaries, and religious persons. It is certainly neither the pleasure of society, the integrity of heart, the knowledge of the truth, the joy of a good conscience, the sublime enjoyment of wisdom, nor even the penetration of wit, or the glory of reputation. These however are the true goods of the soul, which adorn it, enrich it, and satisfy it; but they are goods which are equally divided between the great world and retreat; so that the people of the world have no more right to pretend to them, or to arrogate to themselves the possession of them, than the most penitent souls. Therefore the world has not a right to boast of its happiness, by the enjoyment of these goods; since those who are not of the world may enjoy them as well as they. What then are the goods which belong in particular to the world, and in which the world thinks to find its happiness? Observe, I pray you, that all these goods are exteriour to man, and their delights are terminated in satisfying the senses. The possession of riches, or the right to seek and acquire them; the honours of the world; the glory of pomp and dress; the

the satisfaction of the senses; the delicacy of the table; the satisfying curiosity; and what is loved still more, the liberty of enjoying all these goods, of partaking of them according to one's inclination, and of satisfying his caprice with them: this is all the happiness of the world.

Now I do not undertake to prove here, how vain these pretended goods are, how criminal they are, and how dreadful they are. I do not stay to establish a thing, which would be very easy for me to prove; that there is scarce any person upon earth who can be in possession of all these advantages. I shall confine myself to my first idea, and say, that these things are not what contents the heart; what can fill the whole heart, and what ought to satiate the whole heart for ever; but let us come to particulars.

A rich man, say people, is a happy man; but what is his happiness? Is his heart content? Is it satiated? Is it satiated for ever? In order that his heart should be happy in his riches, it were requisite that this satiated heart should never desire others; now how many of these tranquil hearts are there, that are equally freed from poverty and desires; I do not say only among the unjust usurpers of other peoples goods, but even among those rich people that are thought to be moderate and virtuous? I will ask their hearts, and will scrutinize them, and what else shall

I find there but desires? You think that man rich, and he does not think he is so himself, for he pretends he wants such and such advantages. How regular soever his desires may be, how small soever the object may be that instigates them, they are desires after all. Now he that expresses desires, expresses at the same time a vacuity and privation, in a heart which is not satiated.

However this is what all those commonly experience, who possess the greatest riches. The poor man is more easily contented in his misery, than the man that is at ease in his abundance. Do not imagine that you should desire nothing more, if you had but obtained that little good which occasions all your anxiety; for you would still after that think on some other advantage, which you would pursue with the same inquietude. Those that possess what is now the only object of your desires, desire themselves something else besides it, which you dare not yet pretend to; but which you would hope for as well as they, if you approached nearer to it. This is what the experience of all ages cannot permit us to be ignorant of. It is the same with our hearts, as with a man that is consumed with a burning fever; he seeks to quench his thirst, and that thirst is enraged with what ought to assuage it: in like manner that poor thirsty heart desires without bounds, and its desire is never contented;
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and whilst it exhausts itself in those frivolous anxieties, can it find contentment in the riches it is master of? No certainly. But what is more strange, is that independantly of those desires, it even neither finds rest nor peace in them, so necessary to true felicity.

Indeed, Madam, you yourself will confess, what difficulties, cares, troubles and inquietudes, do we not daily reap in that dreadful field? How many times have I not seen you doubt yourself, whether it would not be more happy to have less riches, and to live in greater peace? Taxes, law suits, charges, possessions, farmers, servants and tradesmen, are so many enemies that besiege the gates of the rich, and so many inconveniencies that seem to be destined only to disturb their rest. Add to these, envies, jealousies, and enmities, which the splendor of rank, and that of riches, draw after them. Is there any thing but misfortunes that surround you, and the danger to which the most fortunate are perpetually reduced, of being ruined, and becoming poor? And who is there in this unhappy world, that has not been troubled with some fear? There is not so much as the inconstant seasons, but what alter your pretended happiness; because on them your harvests depend, and consequently the best part of your riches. Cold and drough frost and rain, keep all the year your hopes in suspense, and your heart in alarms: what

a miserable happiness is this which thus depends on the caprice of the winds, and the inconstancy of the weather?

Glory, distinctions and honours, are another sort of good, wherein men as vainly pretend to find a part of their felicity. I would ask them again on account of this imaginary good, what I have already asked concerning riches; is the heart contented with it? Is it satiated with it? Do they obtain these advantages without any difficulty? Do they possess them without fear? Do they lose them without emotion? I ought rather to have asked you, who they are that enjoy this reputation, these distinctions, and these honours, which are regarded with so much envy, and where pride and vanity have nothing more to desire? I see all men running, busying, and intriguing, hurrying, labouring to raise themselves, and exhausting themselves to obtain them. Now is to seek, to hurry, to labour, to desire, and to exhaust, rest and contentment of heart?

Perhaps you will think to find a more solid felicity in the pleasures of life, and in the delights of the senses. It is true I sometimes see those that give themselves up to these pleasures, transported with their charms. Immoderate laughter, excessive joy, instruments of music, melodious songs, sudden acclamations, and the confused voices of those people that excite themselves to pleasure, declare
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to me the ravishment of their hearts. Then that enchanted heart is dilated, and pleased in itself; it seems to swim in pleasure. The worldling triumphs at that moment; he insults devotion and the devout, and sometimes religion itself. He declares with transport that he is well, he is content, and that he is happy in the highest degree; but how long does this happiness continue? only some moments, or some hours at most, which fly away with so much the more rapidity, as they pass the more agreeably. But what then? is it by some moments, and such short moments, that we are to judge of felicity? Ought not contentment of heart, in order to be really such, to be solid and permanent; and are some moments sufficient to make a soul happy, that is infinite in its desires, and eternal in its duration?

If it be by some moments that we must judge of the happiness of life; then we must call the unjust, the thief, the murderer, and the revengeful, happy, what horror forever their crimes bring with them. Indeed there is an instant when the heart of these villains is pleased and dilated in the dreadful satisfaction of iniquity; but that rapid instant perishes immediately, and annihilates with it the complacency of the heart, which has not the opportunity of reposing therein. We ought then to call the drunken man truly happy, in the midst of the fumes of intem-

perance ; because in that unhappy state, such a man thinks himself happy ; since he is content, and free from all inquietude. We must, therefore, call a man happy who, during the night, is amused with agreeable dreams ; and a hungry man, who thinks in his sleep that he is regaling himself at imaginary feasts, but at his awake finds himself devoured by a real hunger, which those phantoms had not satiated. In those hours of sleep, or drunkenness, those unhappy men are content and satiated ; but there is something wanting in these pretended happinesses, which is duration. It is not therefore by these transitory moments in which reason being led does not reflect, that we are to judge of the happiness of life ; but it is by the duration as much as by the delights. Man, in order to be happy, must possess a solid, real, and durable happiness. Now is this solid, real, and durable happiness to be met with in those wanton joys, which sometimes transport you ?

What other good have you still remaining, upon which you might ground your pretended happiness ? You will tell me, the liberty of enjoying, or at least of seeking, all the other goods which may amuse the man, if they cannot content him. I clearly perceive, that from this objection you think to take an advantage of me, and that your whole resource is in it. Liberty, according to you, is the

the greatest of all advantages, and the consolation of all miseries : liberty, which ought to be purchased at the price of all goods whatsoever, which ought consequently to indemnify for the loss of them, and to set a man, even an unhappy man, above slaves that are the most fortunate in their captivity. I own that true liberty is a good which merits the preference of all others ; but will you permit me to ask you first, what you understand by that liberty ? Is it the liberty of doing evil ; that of sinning, or of enjoying criminal pleasures ? But what then ! is this an advantage and a happiness ? Is it not a thousand times a greater happiness, to be under an impossibility of doing evil ; since the felicity of heaven, which ought to be the model of that which we may enjoy upon earth, consists partly in the precious advantage of being incapable of sinning. Therefore that is not the liberty which you must boast of to defend yourself. Now to what will that liberty be reduced, which is your consolation ? It is reduced to the common actions of life, to the engagements of the heart, to some lawful pleasures, and to the duties of civil society. Let us examine whether this liberty be as real as you flatter yourself it is ; and let us see whether you are as jealous of the preservation of this good, as you ought to be. Alas ! you think perhaps that you see nothing in the world but liberty ; and

for my part I see nothing in it but constraint.

Constraint in marriage. The pleasure of the best chosen alliances, consists only in complacency and dependance. Is dependance and complacency liberty? Yet how many are there of those marriages that are so fortunate? Will not the wicked and flandering world tell you better than I can do?

Constraint in celibacy, or widowhood. In the one, a frail reputation to manage, and duties without number to fulfil; and in the other, children to bring up, or to provide for; rights to pursue, or to maintain; and goods to preserve, or to defend. In both, there are affairs, and infirmities, to undergo, and very restraining decorums to be continually observed.

Constraint in fortune. Are we to acquire a fortune, or to preserve it; how many dependencies and subjections are there? The more protectors we have, and the more masters we have, whose injustices and caprices we must daily put up with. There is not so much as our very enemies, or envious, but to whom we sacrifice our liberty. We restrain ourselves continually, either to please them, or to guard ourselves from their malignity.

Constraint in offices, employments, and dignities. The moment that raises us to them, makes us in some manner the slaves
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of all those that seem to be subject to us. Their wants, their complaints, their petitions, and sometimes their importunities, become laws to us, which we are obliged to undergo the rigour of. The penetrating eyes of the public, attentive to all our steps, sometimes put a bridle even upon our most just recreations.

Constraint in the passions. What a misfortune is it if we abandon ourselves to the fury of them! One of them alone is sufficient to tyrannize the heart, and to blind the mind itself. The wisest, and the most happy, is he that keeps them continually in slavery. But how can he boast of his liberty with such a subjection?

Constraint even in pleasures. Have we them when we seek them? Do we relish them when we have found them? Do we enjoy them peaceably when we relish them? Society itself, which makes them more pleasant, brings with it a thousand sorts of attention which politeness exacts, and to which a soul, captivated with its liberty, ought with difficulty to accommodate itself.

Though you knew how to free yourself from all these constraints, yet how would you avoid those that the politeness of the world, the decencies of state, the malignity of men, the severity of the laws, the importunity of Friends, the complaisance of society, and the duties of religion, impose upon you?

What judgment ought you to form of him that would shake off all these constraints? You think so as well as I; and that phantom of liberty, reduced to almost nothing by so many subjections, obliges you to say in the bottom of your heart: yes, I am constrained, I am in slavery. From morning till evening, so far from doing what I will, I am forced to do what I would not. It is not so much my liberty that gives motion to my actions, as some foreign motive which drags me contrary to my own propension, and disturbs my inclinations. Such is the acknowledgment that every man of the world will make without any difficulty, if he will speak without disguise; but can he after this boast the advantages of his liberty?

Let us carry this reasoning still further, which I presume to call a demonstration. Let us allow to worldlings all their false pretensions; and let us grant them that the happiness they think they enjoy is real and solid, though they fatigue us every day with their griefs and complaints; and though we often times, to the glory of the servants of God, see people of the world coming to them, to unburthen their hearts with them, to tell them their miseries and their displeasures, to complain of the hardship of their state, and to seek in the counsel of those solitary souls, that consolation which the world refuses to its slaves. Let us grant, if they will, that
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the worldling lives in liberty; that he enjoys all pleasures; and that he is filled with riches and glory. Give even scope to your imagination, that it may form to itself the idea of a man that is perfectly happy according to the world: let him be honoured without envy; rich without lawsuits; sensual without infirmity; and free without contradiction or restraint. Will that man be happy with such a happiness of heart, as affects the heart, as satisfies it, and as satiates it? Will that happiness be durable and proof against every thing? No, he will still find in himself a new source of bitterness, of grief and remorse, which I have taken no notice of hitherto, and which I shall now disclose to you.

I do not speak here of those worldlings who, given up to corruption and impiety, heap crimes upon crimes, and swallow iniquity like water. I despise the victories I might obtain over those wicked wretches, whose conscience, by gnawing them continually, confounds them sufficiently by its remorses. It would be a weak advantage to me, to have proved that their state is more unhappy, than that of the holy and virtuous souls. I speak of those people of the world, that are, if I may presume to say so, half devout, whose life is mixed with sensuality and good works; being too much of christians to abandon themselves to evil, and too slothful to prac-

life good; they walk gently and peaceably in a certain medium, in which they imagine they give to religion a sufficiency to stifle remorse, and to their senses enough to satisfy their desires. They dress, and deck themselves as worldlings do; and they speak and reason like good people. They assist willingly at the offices of the church, and at the benedictions; and they immediately recreate themselves with long and eager play. They love sometimes to approach the sacraments; but do not hate dissipation and companies. They equally avoid both what might alarm modesty, and what might restrain sensuality. Their life is neither criminal nor penitent; and they pretend to render it more pleasant, by taking with both hands, the consolations of piety, and the joys of the world.

This, Madam, if I be not deceived, is the idea you form to yourself of true happiness; this is the state which you deem preferable to every other, and to which you aspire. Now it is of this very state, whose portrait may have charmed you; a state perhaps the most dangerous of all to salvation, that I maintain its happiness is chimerical; because it is impossible to find in it that rest and contentment of heart, which is essential to felicity.

Indeed, are you so happy as to be without any passion, without temptation, without being susceptible of any impressions of sensuality,

sensuality, and without having any thing in yourself which is, as it is in others, the grievous fruit of the sin of the first man, and the source of those which we commit after his example?

You are too equitable to presume to pretend that you are. Formed with the rest of mankind of one and the same dust, and moulded of the same earth; you have contracted like them the weaknesses, miseries, passions, and dangers of it. Now what I cannot conceive, is this; that being in the midst of every thing that excites the passions, you constantly resist their motions, and you do it without any difficulty, or struggle, and consequently without any trouble. To be continually with those that boast of the grandeurs of the world, and your heart not be captivated with vanity; to live in delicacy, and to preserve in the bottom of your soul that penitential spirit, without which you would not be truly a christian; to be always in connexions and familiarities, and to hear perhaps the language of tenderness and gallantry, and your heart never to be caught with them; and to be incessantly environed with flandering and licentious people, and always to preserve a horror of every thing that is offensive to charity or modesty, is, in my opinion, one of the rarest prodigies of virtue and fidelity. Do you work this miracle, which is so astonishing, without its costing

costing you, either endeavours, difficulties, or struggles?

What answer can you give me? Will you acknowledge, that to avoid the trouble and constraint of so restraining a state, you suffer yourself to be dragged after the malignity of the world, with which you are surrounded? It would be badly defending your cause, and the pleasures of that state, to own the disorders thereof: the satisfying of iniquity, is not the means to make it prevail over the delights of piety, in order to render a man solidly happy. What then? Is resisting temptations, which are so frequent, so pressing, so violent, and so interesting, a felicity which you could boast the advantages of? How will you agree the peace of heart with so obstinate a conflict, and which, I dare say, is so disadvantageous to you?

I easily conceive, that a penitent soul is at peace, by the care it has taken to interdict itself every thing that might excite in it the vivacity of its passions; but as to your part, being in the midst of all that nourishes them, and of all that excites them, what assaults, what dangers, and consequently, what constraint must you have?

What greater constraint is there, than to be every moment in danger of failing in our duty; and at the same time to reject every thing, and to let nothing escape, that may offend it? What greater constraint, than to experience at once all the severity of temptations,

tations, and all the reproaches of grace? To be dragged by all the violence of the passions; and to be restrained by all that is terrible in the judgments of God? What greater constraint, than to walk upon the slope of an abyfs, to be continually in danger of being precipitated into it, and to maintain ourselves only by continual endeavours? What greater constraint, than to keep the ballance continually in our hands, that we may only go precisely so far as where sensuality is not a sin, and where sin is not mortal?

Once again, do this constraint, these conflicts, and these endeavours, agree with the peace of the heart, the happiness of the heart, and the contentment of the heart? Ah! rather instantly renounce all the charms of the world: sacrifice the world altogether, with all its pleasures and dangers, rather than to immolate each of your irritated passions in particular and without ceasing, and to offer daily such troublesome sacrifices. Who will give me wings, that I may fly with the dove far away from these perils, and find in retreat, that rest and peace which the world cannot give?

No, the world cannot give that peace and rest, and I shall complete the proof of it by a final reflection. I draw it from the trouble and uncertainty which those souls, that I have just described, must be in about
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their salvation and their eternity. For in fine, it is to no purpose to be intoxicated with the world, and to forget God. Faith has its lights, and grace has its moments. A happy moment for the sinner that yields, and is converted; but a cruel moment for him that resists it, in whom the sweetness of grace is changed into despairing remorse, and mortal inquietude! And indeed what means is there to avoid being disquieted upon an affair so important, whose success is so rare, and whose ruin so interesting? In this just inquietude, which the saints themselves sometimes experience, what can encourage those sensual and worldly souls? Alas! I scarce see any thing that can. On the contrary, I see that every thing is to augment their trouble; and even happy are they if nothing makes them despair. What trouble indeed! when on the one hand they view the maxims of the gospel, and on the other the effeminacy of their lives! When the first duty of a christian is to renounce himself, and notwithstanding his whole employment from morning till evening is to seek himself: when he shall give an account to God, even of an idle word, and notwithstanding he says so many criminal words every day: when an injurious word said to a brother shall be punished with fire, and notwithstanding he multiplies slanders, malignities, and abuses: when there is a law to do penance, and carry

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his cross daily, and notwithstanding he has no other attention than how to avoid evil and pain; and instead of carrying those involuntary crosses courageously which God sends us, he receives them only with indignation, drags them with disgust, and provokes heaven by his murmurs. Reflect, Madam, in the midst of your delights, upon these important truths, and tell me after that, if your heart be insensible. Alas! could it be insensible? Now, is a heart that is agitated, touched, and disquieted, with so much reason, upon the greatest of all misfortunes that threaten it, a happy heart, and content in its pleasures?

But what shall the excess of its just inquietudes be, at the approaches of death? There is the completion of the misery of worldly people, and the last proof of their pretended felicity. I shall not dwell to tell you, that how happy soever a person might have been, that happiness is no longer a happiness, when he is obliged to lose it. I shall confine myself within my last reasoning, and say, what troubles and what fear shall he have, who sees that there is no longer a resource for him, in all those goods which he has been intoxicated with so long? I know what the peace of a fervent soul may be at that time; it leaves a world which it has not loved; and it approaches to a life after which it has always sighed: its hope supports it, and the
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mercy of God comforts it. But as to a sensual and worldly soul, is not all that has been its happiness and its delights, to be then its bitterness and despair?

Let us here resume my whole reasoning. The true happiness of man must be in the heart, and cannot consist but in the peace and contentment of the heart. The man of the world does not find it in those goods which he has such an avidity for: neither does he even find it in his pretended liberty. If he possesses some goods, those goods are divided, they are perishable; the enjoyment of them is mixed with troubles, it necessarily ends with death. Therefore it is not the man of the world that possesses true felicity. Let us see if we can find it in fervour, in piety, in penance, and in the practice of true devotion.

The third truth. If I did not find a real happiness in the practice of piety, yet I should conclude notwithstanding that the way of virtue is a thousand times preferable to every other. It is true, I should conclude at the same time, that felicity is not to be found any where upon earth; since it is neither found in the world, nor in retreat. Thus being obliged to chuse between two states that are full of miseries and afflictions, I would prefer that state whose miseries are the less perilous, and whose crown is the more certain. Being forced to abandon, for
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some few remaining years of life, a vain phantom of happiness, which I should not find any where, I would confine myself to chuse amongst the miseries of life, those which would conduct me to a happy eternity.

But I should be far from abandoning thus the happiness of virtue, and the pleasures of the service of God. I speak it boldly, and am not afraid of being contradicted by any solid reasoning; that if it be possible to be happy on earth, if God in his mercy has left us any consolation, and any solid pleasure to be enjoyed among the miseries that surround us, it is only in virtue, piety, and fervour, that we can find those advantages, which the world does not deserve to know.

Let us here call to mind those evident principles which I established at first. True happiness, I said, is that which is in the heart, and which satisfies the heart; which fixes the desires of the heart, and appeases its inquietudes. That man alone is happy, who is under shelter from troubles, agitations, indignation, and despair; who possesses what he desires, and desires only what he may possess. His happiness is complete, when to this peace of heart, he joins the delights of the mind, the relish of wisdom, the pleasures of love, the joy of charity, the knowledge of truth, the glory of conflicts, and the consolation of hope.

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Such is true happiness, and such is that which is found in piety; whether we view it with regard to that solid peace which it procures, or whether we view it with regard to those pleasures it gives us the enjoyment of.

True and solid peace is the first appenage of virtue. Trouble and agitation are brought to us only by the passions: and what irritates them, is the interests of avarice and concupiscence. Now the first step that must be taken in the path of virtue; is to destroy that concupiscence, to struggle with avarice, and to have no longer before our eyes, any other interest, any other ambition, nor even any other affair, than that of a happy eternity. It is upon the broken remains of the passions and concupiscence, that the first foundations of true piety are laid. Some people, in order to succeed the more certainly therein, voluntarily divest themselves of all the earthly goods they possess: they even carry their precaution so far as to renounce for ever the right of possessing them. Others attached to those very possessions by such bonds as providence does not permit them to break, carefully disengage their hearts from all those chains which surround them, that they may set them upon nothing but God alone. The one and the other charmed only with sacrificing all to God in order to please him, present to him continually the precious offering of

of a generous renunciation of themselves, and of the annihilation of their self-love.

To form a better judgment of that peace, which those holy dispositions ought to operate in a soul that is solidly virtuous, let us here make a comparison between his state and that of those worldlings, I have just described to you. The man of the world is continually agitated with such desires as he cannot satisfy. What other desire has the faithful soul, than that of pleasing God? A desire which is satisfied with itself; since the desire of pleasing God, is pleasing to him.

The worldling has imperious masters, he has enviers, and has enemies from whom he has all to fear. The faithful soul fears nothing, neither enemies, nor the jealous: he possesses nothing; neither is he attached to any thing: God alone is his support and his glory, which neither the jealous, nor enemies can deprive him of.

The worldling is disquieted, because his goods are frail, his duties are innumerable, his occupations are divided, and his hopes are uncertain. The faithful soul uniting all in God, finds that repose therein, which the world is unacquainted with: he alone is all his treasure, he is his hope; and as to all the duties which this faithful soul has upon his hands, he receives them from God, he fulfils them for God, and it is God that crowns them.

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The worldling is troubled in his losses; he is agitated even in his pleasures. The faithful soul renounces the pleasures of the senses, and all his expectation on earth is to suffer. Content with his lot, he blesses God, even when he lays his hand heavy upon him: he frequently burthens himself by choice with voluntary rigours; and how should he be troubled, either by sufferings that he loves, or in pleasures that he does not seek after?

In fine, the worldling finds no solid consolation in the midst of those pains that torment him; but the happiness of the faithful soul is not confined to rest and peace; it is completed by real joys, and solid delights.

What delights indeed must there be, in penetrating into the depth of the sublime wisdom of the law of God, in enjoying the contemplation of heavenly things, in nourishing himself with the truth, in living in purity, and in tasting the sweets of charity? What delights must there be for that soul, in obtaining the only good which it desires, and which it desires with all its vivacity; and in obtaining it by those very desires which it produces. All this ardour is terminated in loving God tenderly, in being loved by him, in possessing him by loving him; and it is in this ardour itself that he finds this desirable possession; since the heart issues forth those desires, only
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because it is God that forms them in it. God is therefore in that soul as it were in his sanctuary; and that soul in its turn is in God as it were in its center; it speaks to him, it hearkens to him, it unites itself to him, and is plunged in him: in it God takes his delights, and in it God is pleased to pour out his treasures. This is what the prophet expresses by the sweet society of the bridegroom and the bride. Such is the title with which God honours a faithful soul; and such is the quality which his tenderness causes him to take with regard to it. What delights, and what consolations, ought not such amiable titles to promise? *In this place,* says he, *which you call a desert, and which frightens you by its aridity and solitude; even there it is that the purest pleasures are found, the songs of alacrity, and the acclamations of joy; the acclamations of those who are transported with consolation, resound therein on every side: there the voice of the bride is heard, who finds her spouse again; and the voice of the bridegroom who takes a pleasure in his bride.* The bride lets her voice be heard, when she mourns, when she invokes, when she combats, and when she fights: and the bridegroom lets his voice be heard, when he encourages, when he comforts, when he applauds, and when he crowns.

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You ought, Madam, to have the heart of saints, and I ought to have the language of angels, to entertain ourselves longer with those sublime delights, which are so far above our senses, and our expressions. But the testimony of all the saints cannot suffer us to be ignorant, how real those consolations are, which we enjoy in the love of God. I add, that they are likewise solid and durable; another advantage which we do not find in the foolish joys of the world.

Indeed, the happiness of the just is founded, as one may say, upon God himself, upon his goodness, upon his providence, upon his tenderness towards us, and upon his mercy: it is supported by faith, which does not change; by hope, which does not confound, and by charity which, according to *St. Paul*, will never end. Can this happiness be established upon more solid foundations? Hence it is that every thing by which mortals are troubled and afflicted, does not alter the happiness of the just man; because these misfortunes come to him only through the channel, as one may say, of the providence of God; and they present themselves to his eyes only under the cover of the order of God, whose judgments he adores and whose will he loves in all things.

This makes me compare those solidly virtuous souls, and the solitudes wherein they enclose themselves, to islands mounted aloft in the midst of the seas, where the inhabitants

tants live in peace, though furrounded with the most frightful tempests. There they behold the foaming sea lift up its threatening waves even to the skies, and so far from being terrified with it, they make that fight the subject of their amusement. Such, in the eyes of a soul disengaged, is the sight of the agitations of the world, of its conflicts, of its iniquities, and of its furies. He sees them without being troubled with them: he is surrounded by them, and the solidity of his happiness is no ways shaken thereby. In vain does the world seem sometimes to menace his repose, and desirous to trouble it by its persecutions: for what can it do against those whom God himself has undertaken to support and defend? No, no, ye grandees of the world, ye powers of the earth, your power does not extend over a heart disengaged from the world, and closely united to God. You may lay provinces waste, throw terror amongst the nations, conquer kingdoms, and triumph over the whole earth; but you will never shake a soul that God has solidly established in peace. Tyrants were seen in their fury to exhaust their cruelty upon the martyrs; and the firmness of the martyrs was seen to triumph over the efforts of the tyrants: and we shall see again the patience of the saints triumph over your persecutions. It was for all his servants that God said: *the evil shall not touch you, neither*

Shall the scourges approach your habitation : Such is the word of God. What happiness can be more solid, than that which is founded upon such a favourable promise ? [*Psalm xc. 20.*]

I say moreover ; this happiness is so solid, and so invariable, that I may call it in one sense, an eternal happiness. Indeed, the delights which the soul has already tasted in the service of God, are not past delights with respect to it. This is the lot of the pleasures of the senses : the same moment sees them arise and perish ; and as there remains nothing of them, new ones must be sought for every hour ; but those which the fervent soul tastes in prayer and penance, do not pass away in the same manner ; because charity is the principle of them. The pleasures which the soul has enjoyed, are not in its regard pleasures that are past ; they are only a foretaste of the same pleasures which it will experience again : the consolation of them remains with the remembrance ; and their merit and recompence will never end. I even add, that this pleasure in its own nature may in some manner be called eternal. I will explain myself. The happiness of a soul that is united to God, and is comforted in him, is in one sense the same happiness which the elect of God enjoy in heaven. Indeed, what renders the elect happy, is not only their being sheltered from the

the miseries of this life; but it is chiefly in being with God, in possessing God, and in being absorbed in God. Now this, as one may say, is a portion of the same felicity which God communicates beforehand to those holy souls, whom he is pleased to favour; and this makes the duration, and if I may presume to say so, the eternity of their happiness: a happiness which they begin to experience in this life, which does not forsake them in death, and which they find again in heaven. It is always the same charity which causes their delights; and it seems to me, that it might be said in one sense, that these different delights are different in themselves, only by the measure and abundance of them; but that their foundation is the same: so that this happiness which begins in retreat, is perfected in penance, triumphs in death, and is completed in eternity, is in its own nature an eternal felicity.

It is just to make you also observe here, in the happiness I am describing, a new character of its superiority over that which the world may boast of to you. I have said so, and I will repeat it again, that death is a terrible trial for that pretended felicity of the world. Let it be real if you will, let it be abundant, and let it be solid; alas! what becomes of it at that terrible moment? Now that which occasions the despair in the man of the world; what sentiments ought it to

produce in the heart of a man truly virtuous, who having spent his days in desiring to be united to God, sees his desires completed with his life? Shall I say it to a person captivated with the love of the world; shall I also run the hazard of speaking a language which he will not be able to comprehend? And yet it must be said to the glory of the grace of God, which works these prodigies. Yes, death itself has its consolations and delights. The saints have taught us so. Those of the old testament are known; and we still find daily among the just, and in fervent communities, some of those disengaged and heavenly souls, against whom death disarmed seems to have no power; and who finish a life with delight, which they have supported with patience.

The happiness of the saints upon earth is therefore real, is solid, and is proof against pain, vicissitude, and death. Shall we after this be astonished to find so many souls living in mortification, and in the contempt of the world; who also say boldly and constantly, that they are content, they are happy, and desire nothing? Shall we be surprised to observe contentment, and gaiety itself, painted upon their countenance, and in their manners; to see those noble sensations of joy perpetuated from age to age, amongst so many millions of solitaires, and religious women, who voluntarily and by choice have

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embraced the state of penance, preferably to every other ; who have chosen it with knowledge and reflection, after examinations and severe trials ; and who content with their lot, are by their amiable and almost jocund humour, the envy of the happiest worldlings.

It is indeed in those holy retreats, that God perpetuates a prodigy which the world scarce believes, and which it conceives still less. The more solitary, poor, and austere, these houses are, the better we observe that fervour full of gaiety, and that contentment, which God alone can be the principle of. I do not speak of those imperfect and worldly religious women, that murmur at their state, which they embraced perhaps only through necessity ; that bear all the weight of the rule, without finding therein that consolation which God annexes to it ; because they do not fill up the measure of those graces which God bestows on them. Such religious women ought not to hearken to upon the happiness of a state, which they are ignorant of : is it even astonishing that they are insensible to the pleasures of it, since they have not the spirit of it ? I only speak here of those souls that are truly religious in mind and heart ; and are such by their fervour, their courage, and their fidelity. They are the persons to whom happiness is promised ; it is they that enjoy it in all its latitude ; it is they that

have a right to say, and say it indeed : I am happy, I am content, and would not change my solitude for all the advantages of the world. Yes, O Lord, I continually experience, that thy yoke is sweet, that the weight of thy law is light, and that thy service is amiable. They say this at their entrance into retreat, they are sensible of it in the course of their labours, and they enjoy it still in greater purity in the completion of their sacrifice.

Let a search be made amongst the slaves of the world, will any be found that bear a testimony like this to their vanities ? Will any be found that dare say they are happy, they desire nothing, that there is not any thing sweeter, or more comfortable, than the yoke they bear, nor than the duties with which they are oppressed ? Now what the world does not say, what it has no right to say, what it even dares not say, or what it would but say at most through ostentation, I find it in the mouth of many thousands of people of both sexes, of all states, of all ages, of all countries, of all times, and of all the different characters of mind and humour, that in the very rigours of mortification, and amidst the punishments of martyrdom, bear this glorious testimony to the truth. Men distinguished by their birth and dignities ; young girls naturally jocund ; widows noble, rich, and delicate ; young men the
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only heirs of rich possessions; people of a mature age and famed for their wisdom; and even princes accustomed to plenty, independance, and delicacy: all these undeceived with regard to the vanities and goods of the world, and resigned to penance and the practices of a christian life, have born, and still bear, an unsuspected testimony to the pleasure of their state. They bear this testimony after having embraced that state with precaution, by a choice made at leisure and with due reflection; after trials and conflicts; and after having examined and tasted, even for many years, whatever is most seducing and most pleasant in the world. Are not people so wise, so well instructed, so experienced, and so numerous, who judge only of what they themselves are sensible, who speak only according to their own experience, and an experience of several years, whose testimony is uniform for so many ages, to be credited, when they pronounce upon the happiness of virtue, the delights of love, and the consolations of penance; and when they say with transport as the prophet did: *Yes, O Lord, one day in thy house, is better than a thousand in the tents of sinners?* [Psalm lxxxiii. 11.

Weigh with me, Madam, the force of this testimony, and see if a completer and more convincing one can be found. What, indeed, is requisite to certify a truth attested

by those that bear witness to it? Must those witnesses be in great number? Now what greater number would you have than that of the witnesses I have cited to you; all the saints, all the martyrs, all the solitaries, from the establishment of monasteries in *Thebais* and *Egypt*, down to our times? Must these witnesses be free from collusion? But how should so many millions of solitary and penitent souls make a collusion in their different languages, living in such remote ages and countries? Must these witnesses be without any prevention of prejudice? Now with what prejudice could such pure souls as these be blinded? If they have brought any prejudice to the study of virtue, it could but be such as the world had given them, as it has done you. This was the prejudice of self-love against obedience; the prejudice of pride against humiliations; and the prejudice of sensuality against penance. Had not those generous souls as much horror of these virtues before their conversion, as you yourself can feel for them? Must this testimony be disinterested? But what interest could those I am speaking of have, in representing to themselves a pretended happiness, in a state where there should be nothing but preventions and griefs? Was it ever imagined that there should be profit and interest according to the world, in finding happiness and joy in subjection, mortification, and penance?

penance? What must you still have to certify this testimony, and to render it irreproachable? I give a free scope to your incredulity, provided you still have any. Say also, if you will, that it is stupidity, insensibility, simplicity, want of wit and knowledge, which makes some people imagine this pretended happiness. How many of those fervent souls shall I produce to confound you, who at all times have astonished the world by the subtilty of their wit, and by the superiority of their knowledge, at the same time that they edified it by the austerity of their lives?

If after this, you will believe nothing of it but yourself, and judge of it by your senses, your eyes, and your experience; draw near, I will say, and see what passes among the saints; see what their fidelity, their constancy, and their meekness is. Enter into those houses that are celebrated for their fervour and their solitude: examine, interrogate, and ask: approach that burning bush, and you will see it is not consumed. Go into that desert which seems aride to you, and you will see there with astonishment *manna* covering the ground, and the hardest rocks changed into fountains. Examine narrowly what you call crosses and thorns, and you will find a holy unction upon those crosses which mollifies them; and amongst those thorns some pleasant roses which render them

agreeable. But let us speak without a figure : among those recollects and penitents, you shall outwardly behold with surprise, a gaiety of humour without dissipation, a holy joy without levity, and they will tell you sincerely, briskly, and cordially, that they are content, they are happy, and that they would not change their state for that of kings, nor their solitude for all your amusements.

Let us again exhaust all the excuses of incredulity, and let us urge it as far as it deserves. It is said sometimes, that devotees speak thus only out of dissimulation ; that they stay through honour in those practices they have embraced out of levity or disgust ; that, especially in the cloister, or in religion, they must necessarily shew themselves content, since they cannot change their state ; and that, whatever may be said, regrets are common there, but they stifle them either out of vanity or decency. Such is the common language of the world.

But if the griefs and displeasures of penance are so common among those that make profession of it, why do they apply themselves so often, not only to deprive themselves of frivolous pleasures, but to add in secret a thousand sorts of mortifications and austerities, which God alone is the witness of, as he alone is the motive of them ? Why must those who conduct them in the ways of salvation, watch over them to restrain, and
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moderate their ardour for penance? Is not the same holy ardour likewise to be found among such religious persons, as people think they can attack with more advantage? Why do we see them add with emulation to their rule, which is already austere enough, a thousand kinds of penitential practices, which are of no obligation to them? But why do they carry disguise to such a height, especially since it is so restraining? Could they be able to maintain it for fifty or sixty years, even for their whole lives? Can they carry it into the bottom of dens, and into those punishments where the martyrs have tasted the consolations of grace? Would so many communities abounding with young people full of fire and vivacity, who should for the most part be discontented under a rule so severe of itself, agree together to smother constantly and uniformly a grief which should gnaw them incessantly? Would they all have the same interest in disguising their real sentiments; or would they have the same wit to conceal them with so much artifice? Would all those who are entirely employed in the world with the practices of a christian and penitent life, carry the same spirit of disguise and artifice into the tribunal of confession, into the confidence of friendship, and into private conversations with their dearest relations? Do not griefs and sighs escape from an afflicted heart a thousand

times, even when it is determined to dissemble, and does it not manifest, against its will, those secret sentiments which it seeks to stifle? This so constant and so universal a dissimulation which ought to be supposed, seems to me a prodigy, a thousand times more incredible, than that of consolation and joy amidst the labours of penance.

If however, it be so easy to dissemble ones real sentiments, and if that deep disguise be so easy and so common, whence comes it that worldlings have not the same dexterity in disguising their grievances? Why do we see them so frequently complaining to the servants of God, of the piercing griefs with which they are consumed; and seeking in the prayers, or counsels, of the solitaries, a remedy for their bitterness? If a punctilio of honour can work this astonishing prodigy of a silence and violence so constant; why does not the same punctilio of honour occasion the people of the world to use the same language? Whence comes it, that every one of them does not also say in secret: I am content, I am happy, and would not change my riches and fortune for those of kings? All complain, all are afflicted, and all despair, in the very place where dissimulation and artifice reign: they are forced to own sincerely their disgusts and their bitterness. Is not this, O my God, a proof of what thy word teaches us, that the yoke of the world
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is oppressive by its weight; but *that thine is sweet, is light, is amiable; and that thou alone art the God of all consolation.* [Matt. xi. 30. 2 Cor. i. 3.]

In vain will you say, that you have known but too many, and that you still know several persons, that have repented of the devout life they had embraced; and who in holy communities lament in secret upon the rigour of their engagement, and their constraint. It is true there are some souls that are unfaithful to the grace by which they were drawn, and are disgusted with the piety which they had made profession of, perhaps with too much preparation and pomp. It is true there are some discontented religious women, who victims of policy rather than of the love of God, dishonour the happiness of their state; by their infidelity and their complaints. It is even true that there are some almost entire monasteries, where the spirit of the world, mixed with some outside show of regularity, is but too predominant; where there is more taste for sensual pleasures, than for the sweets of prayer; and where the true delights of piety are as much unknown, as in the palaces of the great; but so far are these faithless spouses, and inconstant devotees, from weakening my proof, that on the contrary they discover all the strength of it. Indeed if it were possible, both for virtuous souls to fall into inconstancy,

stancy, and for religious persons to abandon themselves to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures; what is it that supports so many others in fidelity and fervour? What produces in them that contentment of heart to which they bear witness, but the consolation of the love of God, and the strength of his grace, which is superiour to inconstancy, and to all austerities?

Moreover, what would you prove from the testimony of some persons whose regrets and indevotion you are acquainted with? Is it because they are discontented, that it is impossible for others, who are more holy and more fervent, to possess true contentment of heart? You give credit to those deceitful and hypocritical souls, when they tell you, they are consumed with a secret grief, which they outwardly dissemble: why do you not likewise believe those upright and sincere souls, that are incapable of dissembling and deceiving, when they protest to their most confident friends, that they are content in their station, and would not change it for all your pleasures?

What also are those faithless devotees, or those discontented solitaries, whose testimony seems so conclusive to you? They are imperfect and flighty persons, full of passions, humours, and defects, who have made profession of piety out of caprice, or interest; and have had more pride and vanity in their
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ill-understood devotion, than true love for penance. It is those disobedient and indocile religious, that shake off, as much as they can, the yoke of their rule, and the duties of their profession. It is those girls that engaged in a cloister either through surprise, constraint, or stupidity, who having not the spirit of their state, know not the sweetness of it. Is it therefore persons of this character, that I have attempted to display the happiness of, and to describe their consolations? No certainly. I speak of persons faithful to grace, and to their duties; fervent in their diligence, assiduous to prayer and the praises of God; that govern their passions, or strive to subject them; that deprive themselves of those pleasures which their hearts might desire, and are interiorly disengaged from all the goods of the world. Of these it is that I dare pronounce without fear of being ever contradicted, that there has been none from the east to the west, from the creation of the world down to our times, but what was content with his state, and judged it preferable to the world, and to all its vanities.

But what then, you will say again, is a person happy in the midst of crosses, afflictions, and sufferings? Can he be happy in dependency, constraint, and captivity? Is this possible? Yes undoubtedly it is possible; and this is the fourth truth which I am to establish,
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in order to complete the proof of the misery of the world, and of the happiness there is in the service of God.

The fourth truth. In order to maintain that all the severity of penance, all that is painful in devotion, and all the constraint of the cloister itself, is no impediment to the enjoyment of true happiness, I do not pretend to dissemble those constraints, those pains, and those austerities. This, Madam, would be deceiving you, and not convincing you. Thus, so far from concealing them from you, I say without fear, and say it after the Holy Ghost, that in the service of God there are conflicts to be supported, and victories to be obtained: that one must renounce himself, and carry his cross; that it is essential to true piety to be penitent; and that there is no holiness in the cloister without solitude, without subjection to the rule, and without the constraint of an absolute obedience. And so far from weakening my cause by this acknowledgment, that it is the very strength of my demonstration.

Indeed, the true happiness of mankind consists chiefly, as I have said, in the peace of heart; and this peace of heart depends on the annihilation of those vain desires that disturb it, on the tranquility of the passions, and on the subordination of the senses to reason, and of reason to God. This draws peaceably after it, the calm of conscience,
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hope in the mercies of God, the consolation of his love, and a taste of eternity.

However man finds within himself every thing that can bring an obstacle to this happiness. He is born uneasy, proud, avaritious, interested, impatient, sensual, and a libertine. What means has he with such great obstacles to obtain that felicity which is shewn to him? This means is to annihilate those irregular sensations by contrary practices; to combat pride by a sincere and constant humiliation; to contradict his natural avidity for riches, by disengaging himself from all; to put an end to his desires, by refusing to satisfy them; and to subdue sensuality, by depriving himself of pleasures, and by abstinence. This is mortification: and the more complete it is, and the more the principles of trouble and agitation are destroyed in the heart of man: God establishes the happiness of that faithful heart the more solidly, upon the ruins of all the concupiscences that might disturb it.

This is verified in a more sensible manner in a religious state, where the multitude of regular observances seem so troublesome to you. And yet how light soever those observances be in themselves, they are important; because they all tend to establish humility, to inspire disengagement, to preserve the rights of charity, to remove the tumult of the passions, and above all to nourish the
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fervour of the love of God. Every one of these observances is a restraint to the passions, or a memorandum of the vigilance which must be used to overcome them. They are arms for us to defend ourselves with, either against the seduction of the world, or against the temptations of the devil, and self-love. They are *that invincible citadel*, which the prophet speaks of, *that a thousand bucklers surround on every side*. How small soever those bucklers be, their number makes a defence superiour to the efforts of the enemy. Thus it is that those small observances, which you call bridling and constraint, are the security of the religious soul; because they maintain it in peace, by repressing all that might disturb it.

Say therefore no more, that the yoke of the law of God is severe enough, without loading it still with observances and practices, which he ~~has~~ not commanded. No, it is not loading the yoke of the law of God, to add the practice of counsels to it; on the contrary, it is making it pleasanter, and more easy to be born.

Indeed, what is it that occasions what you presume to call the hardness and severity of the law of God? Is it the law in itself? No, *the commandment is holy, and the law is just*, it is good, and full of sweetness. *The yoke of the Lord*, though it be a yoke, is *sweet and light*; and if you doubt of this truth, you

you must doubt also the truth of the Scripture, and the word of Jesus Christ. What is it then that occasions this apparent austerity of the law of God? Is it the conflict of concupiscence which is bridled by this law, and which dares to resist it? The yoke is hard and grievous to animals that torment and beat themselves, in order to shake it off. It is much less severe to those, who being more docile, bear it in peace, and suffer themselves to be conducted. Thus it is that our passions, by resisting the law, occasion the weight and heaviness of it. It is the propensity we have to violate it, which causes our pain and our conflicts. Take away those criminal propensities, those immoderate passions, and that unbounded concupiscence, and the law will appear mild to us, and easy to be practised.

Now what effect has christian piety by the practices which it inspires, and a religious life by the rules which it imposes? It endeavours to annihilate concupiscence, to weaken the passions, to destroy the direful propensities of nature, and to render the law thereby more easy and milder. It is pride that makes us rebel against the law, and hinders a proud man from believing with simplicity, from obeying with docility, and from respecting lawful authority. It is this pride which is attacked at the root, by those humbling practices which piety inspires, and religion

gion prescribes. When a person has subdued pride; what difficulty can he find after that in submitting and obeying, and even in bearing the being forgotten and the contempt of men? It is wrath and humour which render the practice of christian meekness so difficult. Now all the practices of a christian and religious life, contribute to destroy this grievous and troublesome humour in its root. When a person has succeeded in this, does not patience become, both more easy and more pleasant? This is proved in a sensible manner by the facility with which they accustom themselves, for example, in religious houses, to forego a thousand conveniences, to captivate their tongues, to obey readily, and to apply exactly to all the exercises, without even finding that these privations or these duties seem restraining and troublesome. A thousand things which appear incomprehensible to you, cost those souls nothing, or almost nothing, who are supported by grace, and animated by fervour. They suffer, without scarce reflecting, what seems insupportable to you; they hardly believe they merit any thing before God, by these little daily observances, they find such great facility therein. A nourishment without delicacy received with sobriety; a short or interrupted sleep taken upon a hard or incommodious bed; a continual dependance; a strict cloisture; and a constant assiduity
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at the offices of the church ; all this becomes custom and habit to them. When one is accustomed to deprive himself of innocent conveniences, and permitted pleasures, is it difficult to refrain from those which the law of God has so strictly forbidden ? We also see by experience, that a religious man, who is faithful in contracting these holy habits, scarce conceives any longer that a person can live otherwise ; and that if he were obliged to return into the world, it would cost him more to become a sinner, than it did in his retreat to become a saint.

But what then, you will say again, is not a poverty which possesses nothing, a mortification which permits itself nothing, and a captivity which disposes of nothing, a continual and insupportable martyrdom ? That one may be happy in the practice of virtue, as you told me once, I consent to it ; but as to the cloister and religion, is what I cannot allow you ; this is what I shall never agree to. I could stand, Madam, to this acknowledgment ; and would wish that it were so sincere as to engage you to seek in this kind of piety, which is not incompatible with your state, that true happiness which the world will not afford you. But this is not enough ; I must make my demonstration complete. I have even too much advantage in defending the happiness of religion, to abandon its interests

terests thus : let us enter, for your conviction, into particulars.

In order that poverty should be a misfortune in those that make profession thereof, it were requisite that riches and abundance should be a real happiness. Now have you not already conceived, that it is in vain to seek felicity therein ; and that there never is any thing found in them but misery, and a continual inquietude, which is incompatible with the repose and contentment of heart ; so that it is a thousand times easier to be comforted in poverty, than to fix ones desires in plenty ? This is what reason alone discovers to us, and what paganism itself was acquainted with : the *Socrateses* and the *Diogeneses* were more respected in antiquity, than the *Cressuses* and the *Alexanders*. Is it possible that truths respected by the *Pagans*, should be so inconceivable to the disciples of Jesus Christ ; they that ought to find in that state, a glory, and advantages, which those false sages of antiquity could not seek in it ? For in fine, the pretended happiness of those profane people, consisted only in an exemption from the griefs and troubles of life ; but as to us, there is a real happiness in poverty, founded upon the resemblance with Jesus Christ, upon the hope of heaven, upon the victory over the passions, and chiefly upon that sweet consolation which love is sensible of,

of, when it can offer to its God a perfect sacrifice of all that shall be most dear to it.

What do I say, can I agree that those voluntary poor suffer a real poverty in their state of life? What state is the richest; whether is it his that desires all, that has an avidity for all, and is never content; or his that desires nothing? We must judge of poverty by the necessities: he that is freed from the yoke of important necessities, has no longer any thing to do with riches; he has always enough to supply the indispensable necessities of life. Moreover, if those courageous souls have sacrificed the possession of some earthly goods, they possess others a hundred times more advantageous, more consolatory, and which should deserve to be purchased with the privation of all others. Friendship, society, cordiality, charity, sincerity, liberty itself, and freedom from all the cares of a family, and from the troubles of domestic affairs; these, in my opinion, are the true riches: riches of the mind, riches which are proof against all the misfortunes that might ruin those you are possessed of: thieves, lawsuits, or conflagrations, cannot touch this sort of riches. Your son, said St. *Chrysostom* to a man that was afflicted with the retreat of his only son, your son by becoming a solitary, is become richer than you. Would you know his riches? go and take away his cloak where-
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with he is covered, and throw down his cell, he will let you do it without being troubled ; he will even thank you, as *Tobias* gave thanks daily to God for the poverty to which he was reduced. But as to your part, continues that father, let ten pieces of money be taken from you, and it will provoke you : therefore you are poorer than he.

Do the poor of Jesus Christ possess nothing but this kind of riches ? I may add here, that they are masters of all earthly riches, in a much nobler and more sublime manner, than they are possessed by the *grandeers* of the earth. Is it no being in some sort the master of all, when a person offers all, divests himself of all, and sacrifices all to God ? He that possesses worldly goods, possesses but a slight portion of them, some lands, some houses, some rents ; and he is sensible of his riches only in the use he makes of them, to squander them. But how confined is this use, by the smallness of those possessions ! On the contrary, he that renounces all, makes as generous a sacrifice to God, as if he actually offered him the whole universe ; because the possession of the universe would not restrain him in his sacrifice, and because he desires to reserve nothing in it. With what he possesses, he sacrifices his pretensions, his hopes, and his very desires ; which is a greater sacrifice than the whole universe ; since this universe will not satiate our desires. There-

Therefore that generous man sacrifices all ; but what infinite riches does he not acquire by that sacrifice ? It is no longer the land that he possesses, it is God himself that gives himself to him, to be at the same time, both his riches and his hope, his possession and his inheritance. Such is the happy lot of that generous poverty. It is not without resource that a person gives all to God. Should it be likely that this most powerful and liberal God, who does not abate our riches, neither does he stand in need of them, would suffer people to deprive themselves of them for his glory, without recompensing so heroic a sacrifice ? *Trafic*, said he to his disciples. What is this trafic, according to *Tertullian*, which is so admirable and so advantageous to us ? *Abandon frivolous goods, to acquire immense and eternal riches.* Do you believe, after this, that poverty is an evil, and that it can alter the happiness of a religious state ? On the contrary, is it not the source, and the cause of a part of its felicity ?

I say in the same sense, and with as great truth, that mortification has the same advantage ; and so far from altering happiness, that it preserves it, confirms it, and renders it more durable, more sensible, and more comfortable. Observe the whole extent of this paradox. Indeed, I do not so much as say, that penance is a far less evil, than the

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pains we suffer in the world; where in the midst of pleasures themselves we experience such griefs and disgusts as are unknown to religion: I do not so much as say, that it is a necessary evil which is supported with patience, which reason causes to be born with courage; even as the same reason made the philosophers embrace abstinence, a severe life, and the privation of pleasures: I do not so much as say, that one is well indemnified for the pain annexed to mortification, by the humiliation of the flesh, and by victory over the passions: neither do I confine myself to say, that a penitent life is alleviated by custom, habit, and example: though I were to say so, I should say true; but I should be far below the truth, and should weaken the glory of christian penance.

No, I am not afraid to say it, there must be even in mortification, in the austerities of penance, and in the privation of pleasures, some real delights which you do not comprehend; but which fervent souls experience, at least sometimes. I see them, not afflicted with mortification, but joyous and content with being subjected to it. I see them ambiate as a favour, to augment the rigours of it; to desire, to beg, and to importune, that they may obtain the liberty of adding to the penances of the rule, some new kinds of austerities, which the rule does not ordain. The more fervour I find among those holy
souls,

Souls, and the more ardent and eager is this desire. Therefore there must be a certain sweetness in penance, which you dare not hope for, and a heavenly consolation which far exceeds those ideas which our senses give us of it. Indeed, how supportable soever an evil be, we avoid it if possible; how indispensable soever it be, we receive it only with repugnance; and it is much to suffer it with patience. But what we earnestly desire, and what we seek for with vivacity, must be a real good, and such as brings with itself a true consolation. If you know the nature of the human heart, you will readily agree, that it is incapable of desiring any thing but what seems amiable to it, and which bears some character of consolation and happiness.

But what can this consolation and pleasure be? It is that which St. Paul experienced when he cried out: *I am filled with joy and delight in all my tribulations.* [2 Cor. vii. 4.] It is that which the martyrs experienced, when they said in the midst of the punishments themselves, *no feast ever seemed more delicious to us.* It is that which is infused by the grace of God, which taking in the heart the place of sensual pleasures, surpasses them a thousand times, says St. Augustine, by the consolation it brings thither. It is that which is given by the certainty, as one may say, of being in such a state as God would have us

to be in ; because he has predestinated us to be conformable to his son suffering and penitent on earth. It is that which is occasioned by the holy hatred we have conceived against our criminal body, which we punish with all the lenities of vengeance. And in fine it is that consolation which love finds in making itself known to its well-beloved, by unsuspected testimonies. Profane and criminal love knew how to find pleasure in suffering and dying for the object it was transported with ; and shall not divine love have the same relish in penance ; since it is in suffering that it gives the strongest and the least suspected mark to God, that it loves him truly, courageously, more than all things, and more than itself ?

As for your part, Madam, who would love to serve God in conveniences and plenty, will you presume to judge so advantageously of your love for him ? Will you presume to affirm that you love him truly, and with a love that is unsuspected of division or weakness ? You think however that you love him, you protest you do, and imagine you are sensible of it ; but who can persuade you that you do not love yourself still more than your God ; Such is the reasonable doubt which your sensual life ought to occasion you to have. Now what you would not dare perhaps to affirm, the fervent and penitent soul says it with probability, I would willingly

lingly say, with assurance; because *the proof of love*, says St. Gregory, *is works*; and because the most painful works shall be a proof of the greatest love.

From hence it is that several divines have concluded, that the religious profession, wherein they resign themselves to all the austerities of penance, is a mark of perfect love, which equals in some manner, according to them, that which is found in martyrdom: the sacrifice seems almost to resemble it; and it might even be said in one sense, that it includes something more difficult. In martyrdom, the view of an approaching recompence, and the speedy end of the punishments, may help to support courage and love; but in the continual martyrdom of a penitential life, the eternal recompence shews itself only at a distance; and the daily austerity obliges them at every step to repeat a sacrifice incessantly, whose renewal augments love continually, and perpetuates its force and consolation for ever.

These dispositions, you will say perhaps, are good for the saints; but is it possible that a person may attain to this perfection? Yes, no doubt, it is possible; and not only it is possible, but certain that people do attain to it, and even oftener than you imagine. There is nothing but the little society you have with good people, the negligence in which you live, and the small acquaintance

you have with the holiness of many religious houses, which can hinder you from believing it. Yes, what you regard as an almost incredible miracle, is common among those that serve God fervently in solitudes, and in those places of retreat which I may call sanctuaries of divine love. I may even confidently affirm, and a long experience has taught me so, that there is scarce any monastery, I speak even of the relaxed, wherein there are not some of those faithful souls to be found, whose fervour, courage, and consolation, would be capable of confounding your incredulity. It is indeed, the property of the law of God, to produce these miracles in those that love to practise it; because this law is at the same time, both a law of grace, and a law of love: and because it is a law of love, he that fulfils it ought to be filled himself with all the consolation that love can inspire; and because it is a law of grace, he that loves it ought to be supported with all the fortitude that grace can bestow.

In fine, you add, can obedience, dependence, and captivity, be reconciled with these consolations and this happiness? Will you prove to me that a prison is a happy sojourn?

It is your business, Madam, to answer this objection. If you still pretend that you can be happy in the world, happiness must necessarily be found in captivity; since you
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yourself are in captivity, and yet you pretend that you can be happy in it, under the weight of those chains which oppress you. Thus *Tertullian* formerly reasoned, when he compared the chains and servitude of worldly slaves, with the prisons and dens into which the confessors of the faith were thrown; and when he found that captivity of the martyrs more supportable and milder than that of worldly people: you are, said he to those courageous victims of the faith, you are in dark dens, but the darkness of the world is a thousand times more troublesome and more grievous: your hands and your feet are fettered with iron chains; but the bonds which captivate the minds and hearts of worldly people are a thousand times more dreadful. I have a right, Madam, to use the same language to you, and to make the objection fall back upon yourself, which you think you start with so much advantage. The pretended captivity of those faithful souls, is nothing in comparison of that which you yourself experience, and whose rigour makes you daily fetch so many sighs. They are in some manner in darkness, by the ignorance in which they live of every thing that passes in the world; they know not its amusements. Happy ignorance, which shelters them from seduction! But as to you, into what thick darkness are not you plunged, and the world with you? In it neither God,

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nor his law, nor the delights of his love, are known: in it they do not even know themselves. O what a dreadful darkness is it!

They are confined within the narrow bounds of their cloister; but their hearts are free, their wills are content; and Jesus Christ, to whom they have consecrated both, recompenses them sufficiently for their sacrifice, in order to hinder them from regretting it. As to your part, being a slave to your passions, to your senses, and your desires, will you find any thing therein to indemnify yourself for so continual a captivity?

They depend on a superiour, whose authority is limited by the rule, and moderated by charity; but you, Madam, and worldlings with you, on how many masters do not you depend? Pitiless masters, that tyrannise over men without regard, and are obeyed without any desert. You are therefore more restrained, and a greater captive, than those happy slaves of the love of God. Your slavery is unbounded, is void of solid consolation, and is without any merit in the sight of God. Is it then your business, to reproach religious persons with a captivity, which is confined to the senses, and lets the heart at liberty?

But what do I say, ought the engagements of a religious state to be called chains and captivity? He alone is a slave, that is chained contrary to his desires. The worldling
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that is loaded with a thousand chains in his captivity, thinks himself free; because he loves those chains under which he ought to lament: he is content to bear them, he continues in them by his own choice, and would be afraid to be delivered from them. The religious person preserves his liberty much better amidst the engagements he has contracted: it is by his own choice that he has entered into those holy engagements: they are his consolation and happiness: he would undertake them again, if it were in his power to do it: and he would be afflicted, if any should attempt to break them. Thus being subject to a rule that he loves, and observing it faithfully, he follows his inclination, he contents his desire, he is occupied in what he loves, and he remains in the place that is pleasing to him: and by doing all that he ought, he does only what he wills; because he has no other will but his duty.

It is true that in his state there is some sort of captivity; but he does not blush with it: on the contrary, it is his consolation and his happiness. His senses are captives, his desires are chained, and his passions are in slavery; but this is the source of that true liberty his heart enjoys; since his heart itself would be a captive, if his passions, his desires, and his senses, were free to exercise that tyrannical empire over him, which they make

make the lovers of the world but too sensible of.

Let us complete the proof of this last truth; and that we may succeed in it with greater advantage, let us acknowledge again to the lovers of the world, if they require it, that poverty, penance, and constraint, how voluntary soever they be in fervent souls, are real obstacles in them to the repose of their life, and that their state is full of troubles and bitterness, as much and more than that of world'y people. Those generous souls have such resources left as the world is unacquainted with, the hope of salvation, repose of conscience, an eternal recompence, and consolation at the approach of death: these are goods which can indemnify those penitent souls, for every thing that might have been painful in their state. The man that is happy according to the world, is no longer so, when he takes a view of those eternal years which he sacrifices to his pleasures, of the secret judgments which will follow them, and of the rigour of those avenging flames which will be the punishment of them. There is no joy proof against this remembrance; and there is no pain, no suffering, no captivity, no constraint, but what is alleviated at the sight of an approaching happiness, and of a happiness which is almost certain. With views so sublime, and with such solid hopes, privations are sweet, pains are

are supportable, and death itself is a consolation.

Have I now fulfilled, Madam, the design I had formed to myself, and have you still any resource remaining wherewith to oppose it? Will you not now be forced to confess, that the only happiness which can be enjoyed upon earth, is only to be found in rest and contentment of heart; that this contentment cannot have its source in all those goods and pleasures which the world possesses; that virtue and christian piety alone offer us the means of acquiring this felicity; in fine, so far from being incompatible with the regularity of manners, and the austerity of penance, that it even receives its sweetness and perfection from thence?

But what service will it be to you to confess it, if you do not at the same time take a courageous resolution to follow Jesus Christ, who invites you; and to break with the world, which tyrannises over you? Alas! you have but too great a feeling of those chains which fetter you; your heart sighs over them in secret; you look upon them with indignation; and you water them with your tears. Will you therefore confine yourself to those passing sentiments of a moved heart, which shew perhaps more weakness than conversion? Jesus Christ who calls you, and who calls you only to make you solidly happy, expects something else from you besides tears:

tears: he demands a generous effort, he requires sacrifices; and he will have that heart, which he intends to render perfectly happy, to be entirely his. Is this asking too much, after what he has done for you; is this too much for what he still designs to do?



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